

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

For NPS use only

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

received AUG 8 1984
date entered SEP 7 1984

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

1. Name

historic Astor Building

and/or common Liberty Theater

2. Location

street & number 1203 Commercial Street N/A not for publication

city, town Astoria N/A vicinity of First Congressional District

state Oregon code 41 county Clatsop code 007

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 checked="" 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"/> N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Sven A. Sundstrom

street & number 1215 15th Street

city, town Astoria N/A vicinity of state Oregon 97103

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Clatsop County Courthouse

street & number 749 Commercial Street

city, town Astoria state Oregon 97103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title City of Astoria
Landmark

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records City of Astoria Historic Buildings and Sites Commission

city, town Astoria state Oregon 97103

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 N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Astor Building, constructed between 1924 and 1925, is a two-story, reinforced concrete structure which houses the Liberty Theater, half-a-dozen shops, a bar, a cafe, a dance studio, a former radio station and as many as two dozen office spaces. It occupies fully half of the block and faces the street on three elevations. The building form and ornamentation rely heavily on the Italian Renaissance style.

Located on the corner of 12th and Commercial Streets, the Astor Building is surrounded by similarly-scaled commercial buildings in downtown Astoria. It is sited on Lots 1 and 2 of Block 62, McClure's Addition to Astoria, Clatsop County, Oregon and is further described as being within Section 8, Township 8 North, Range 9 West, of the Willamette Meridian, and is otherwise known as Tax Lot No. 57.

Few alterations have occurred on the exterior of the Astor Building. The red tile roof has been replaced by composition shingles, the wood frame windows on the second floor have been replaced by aluminum frames, and the transom windows are now painted or filled in with wood panels. In addition, three bays of columns have been partially infilled and the marquee has been replaced three times. No major structural modifications have occurred and therefore the building could be restored in its original state.

A free-standing, Tuscan colonnade wraps around the shops and offices on the street level and supports a balcony extending from the second floor. The columns have a stuccoed finish as does the entire building facade. Each corner is marked by a tower element which projects slightly outward from the major building form.

Tuscan Doric columns delineate the storefront bays, which are generally composed of five light fixed pane transoms over large single-pane storefronts with recessed entries. A band of windows on the second level are not original, having been replaced by tripartite aluminum-frame, horizontally-sliding sash. These are framed by classically-ornamented pilasters of varying widths, which rest on pedestals from which a small balcony projects. A frieze with intermittent laurel wreath decorations appears above the narrow belt course.

The majority of commercial spaces at street level were originally contained within a single structural bay defined by the Tuscan columns. Currently, several spaces have expanded to two bays without major changes to the exterior. A half wall with stucco siding was added on the north elevation within the bay immediately to the side of the theater entrance. On the west elevation, a full wall reaches the base of the transom inside the second bay from the corner tower. The wall is stuccoed and contains a single door with frosted glass side lights. This bay is unsympathetic with the building's historic character. Similarly, the south elevation has a full stuccoed wall that again reaches the base of the transom. The wall is located in the fourth bay from the corner tower and is without windows. It is possible that all the infilled walls could be

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removed without causing major structural damage to the building. Virtually every transom on all three sides has been painted over or filled in with wood, but could be restored without great difficulty. The commercial interiors on the other hand have undergone many changes. Most spaces have been remodeled several times and have lost much of their original character.

Most of the building's exterior ornamentation is found on the entry of the Liberty Theater, which is entered from the NW corner of the lot. Its tower has been shifted forty-five degrees in order to face the oncoming traffic. A large flat arch spans the foyer entrance, and is supported by inward facing pilasters. These pilasters have chamfered shafts, an elliptical cartouche and festoons in the capital, and floral reliefs from springline to springline. A rectangular box-shaped neon marquee now obscures the crest of the arch.

Four pilasters rise above the foyer's arch and continue through the entire height of the facade. Each pilaster rests on a bracket and rises to a decorative frieze. The pilasters are embellished with a floral motif and have Corinthian capitals. Three bays are formed by the four pilasters. The outer two bays are smaller than the one in the center and are identical to each other, and each contains an arched niche with a font. The cove is semi-circular and makes a ribbed half-dome over the font. Above the cove is a scroll cartouche; the cable from the marquee is attached to the center of the scroll. Above this feature, a fruited festoon is draped between the pilaster capitals, while a shield-like cartouche, surrounded by rosettes, appears in the frieze. The center bay on the facade is dominated by a Palladian-style opening without side lights which is flanked on each side by a set of Solomonic columns with Corinthian capitals. The window employs a console in place of a keystone in the archivolt which supports a small bust. Fruited festoons drape from the bust to the nearby pilaster capitals. In the spandrel panels on each side of the windows is a harp motif which, like much of the exterior ornamentation, is seen elsewhere in the theater. The center frieze again uses the shield-like cartouche, surrounded by rosettes, and adds a vase motif for variation. The tower is capped by a moderately-pitched hip roof.

Smaller corner towers appear on the northeast and southwest corners of the building and serve to visually and physically terminate the movement of the colonnade from the entrance tower. Each exhibits a medium-pitched hip roof. The entrances are through deeply recessed Moorish-style arches. Above this feature, a single window is symmetrically positioned, and is elaborately framed by two Corinthian pilasters with low relief decoration on similarly-decorated engaged pedestals. A diminutive iron balconette spans their bases, and full entablature serves as a lintel. Similar to the other second floor windows, the original has been replaced by an aluminum horizontally-sliding sash window with a fixed transom pane.

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Natural changes occurred within the theater as it evolved strictly into a movie house for sound pictures. The vaudeville stage was covered up, the Wurlitzer organ and cathedral chimes were removed and a concession stand was added. Like the exterior, no major structural changes have occurred. Most alterations are cosmetic (i.e. change of some lighting fixtures, chair upholstery, possible change in carpeting, etc.) the theater could be returned to its original state.

A free-standing octagon-shaped ticket booth is located just within the groin vaulted foyer. Three recessed arches are located on either side of the foyer and frame posters for the up-coming attractions. The lobby is entered through one of three sets of doors, which are framed by pilasters and arches infilled with a cupid and bountiful harvest motif.

Classically inspired plaster ornamentation within the lobby is very controlled, and the majority is confined to door lintels, ceiling mouldings and large circular medallion above the main chandelier. The lobby walls, chamfered ten feet up from their based, gently curve outward into a larger central space. This space is graced by a chandelier, a large mirror, plush carpeting and soft lounge chairs.

To the left of this space, a ramp glides upward to the balcony level. Three Tuscan pillars, with a black and silver banner hung between them, separate the main lobby from a sub-space just outside the entry to the auditorium. This space is spanned by groin vaults and illuminated by chandeliers. A modern concession stand is believed to have been added to this space around 1950 and its presence detracts from the lobby's elegance. The theater was built in an era before theater concession stands were commonplace. Patrons would get popcorn from around the corner at Kildahl's.¹ To the right of the present concession stand was a small statue and fountain recessed in a niche.² The wall between the lobby and auditorium has panes of glass (now covered by stenciled wood panes) which allowed patrons to watch the silent movie from the lobby (parents would take crying babies out to the lobby to calm them). The auditorium is entered through one of three double doors, which are framed on each side by a large pilaster and hanging lantern. The doorways are arched and use the same upper trim as found on the exterior arched window.

The auditorium seats 700 people and was originally furnished with leather opera chairs.³ The seats are now covered with a green corduroy-like material. The auditorium continues the chamfered wall design which commenced in the lobby and divides the wall into two parts. The lower portion, or base, is austere and restricts plastered ornamentation to door lintels and limited bas-relief. The upper portion contains some of Astoria's most valuable original artwork. Across both side walls a series of six arches march toward the proscenium arch. Each arch is framed by pilasters with ornamental detail and a bust figure at its crest. Within each arch is mounted canvas depicting a view through windows on a Venetian canal. Each painting is a continuation of the one next to it and the perspective changes accordingly.⁴ Delicate window muntins are painted over each scene and complete the illusion.

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The paintings were created by Joseph Knowles, an artist well known for his paintings of nature (see biography on Joseph Knowles). "It was first planned to paint Oregon scenes for the theater, but one of the owners of the theater held out for a locale which would harmonize with the character of the structure."³

Knowles' paintings may have been inspired by those of eighteenth century Italian artists. His work closely resembles that of Antonio Canaletto, an artist noted for his panoramic canvasses of the Venetian canals. Both artists use similar subjects in their paintings (i.e. The Grand Canal, Dogana Da Mar, The Church of San Giorgio, Doge's Palace, etc.) and both compose their paintings in a like manner, favoring long perspective views of their subjects. Their paintings are romanticized using soft golden light, dramatic clouds and idealized settings.

The color in both artists' work is atmospheric, though Knowles' is perhaps more so. Knowles' use of color is less vibrant than Canaletto's. The muted colors create a more realistic illusion of views on to the canal. But because some of the colors may have faded from their original shades, a comparison between the two artists' use of color can only be conjectured.

Canaletto often used masses of people to add excitement and movement within his panoramas. Knowles' paintings, on the otherhand, are devoid of all people and therefore remain in a timeless state. The fine detail seen in Canaletto's work is not as apparent in Knowles' work. Knowles may have felt that the detail would be lost in a dim auditorium. But again, a true comparison is difficult and potentially inappropriate. The scale of their canvasses is very different; Canaletto painted on two by three foot canvasses while Knowles used canvasses five by ten foot in dimension.

While Knowles was certainly inspired by eighteenth century Italian artists, he has maintained a style of painting that is clearly that of a twentieth century artist. "They are not bound inflexibly to the conventional 'Venetian idea' but possess qualities of their own."³ The paintings have never been retouched and while faded, they have survived in good condition.

A thick layered moulding, once used for cove lighting, wraps around the auditorium at ceiling level. The ceiling rises slightly to the center where a large chandelier hangs from an even larger circular plaster medallion. Its foliate and circular motifs provide the ceiling with its only ornamental detail and include the faces of gods entwined within swirling vegetation. The chandelier is an original work of Fred Baker.⁴ It weights 1200 pounds and hangs in tiers supported by large brass rings. The glazing may be of glass but the fixture has collected so much dust it is difficult to tell what materials were used. If cleaned, the chandelier would regain much of its former elegance.

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The proscenium arch is now hidden behind a wide movie screen and red tiered curtains. The arch is virtually untouched and still contains the original curtains and is decorated with a large lattice pattern. The vaudeville stage remains unchanged and is now used as storage. A Wurlitzer organ was once a part of the orchestra pit, and organ lofts were located on each side of the proscenium arch. Music was emitted through an archway similar to that which contains the paintings. A lattice work, like that in the proscenium, covers the opening. The organ was a regular part of the bill of fare. Before the film began and during the intermission, the organ would rise out of the orchestra pit on a hydraulic lift. Cathedral bells were hung between the paintings and would light up as each individual note was played.⁵

When the Astor building was built in 1925, it became a cultural center for the town. Not only did it house a combination vaudeville stage and movie theater, but a radio station, dance studio and at least two dozen businesses. The atmospheric qualities of the Liberty Theater created a unique experience for the townspeople of Astoria. After working long days in the canneries, lumber mills, logging camps, or fishing boats, the predominantly Scandanavian community could gather in an Italian Renaissance theater. There they might view a Charlie Chaplin film while surrounded by the canals of Venice.

The Astor building retains those atmospheric qualities today. It remains in excellent condition and has undergone only minor changes. Its architectural style and building form is unique compared to all other commercial buildings in Astoria.

- 1 Telephone conversation with Michael Foster. October, 1983.
- 2 The Astoria Evening Budget, March 24, 1925, p. 5.
- 3 The Astoria Evening Budget, March 3, 1925, p. 5.
- 4 Mrs. Sheila Finch-Tepper, AIA, is presently cataloguing the work of Mr. Baker, an eminent lighting fixture designer in Portland for over seventy-five years.
- 5 Telephone conversation with Marjorie Halderman, October, 1983.

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 checked="" 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 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)

Specific dates 1924–25 **Builder/Architect** Bennes, John and Herzog, Herman A.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Astor Building, a two-story, reinforced concrete building having a movie theater and shops, was designed by the noted Oregon firm of Bennes and Herzog between 1924 and 1925 in the Italian Renaissance style. Erected for well-known West Coast theater operators, Claude Jensen and John von Herberg, the property is locally significant under Criterion "c" as a distinctive example of commercial architecture in a period style which possesses high artistic values in its design, lighting fixtures by Fred Baker, and mural art work by local artist Joseph Knowles.

As all of Astoria's earlier theaters were destroyed in a 1922 fire, the Astor Building served an important function in the redevelopment of the city as a social and cultural focal point, and thus could also be considered locally significant under Criterion "a."

"The picturesque Italian Renaissance architectural scheme which embodies a radical change from the severe box-like exterior of most buildings, has been a feature that has made the new structure outstanding among the many buildings that have sprung up in Astoria since the great fire."¹ This is the way one reporter of the Astoria Budget looked upon the nearly completed Astor Building in 1925. Moving pictures were still a novelty until 1922 when all five of Astoria's theaters were destroyed by the great fire. The Astor Building, housing the Liberty Theater, was the first new combination vaudeville/moving picture playhouse to be constructed after the fire.² The Liberty continued showcasing vaudeville acts for 25 years, probably making it the last theater in the Astoria area to show vaudeville. The Astor Building still stands on the site of 12th and Commercial, as a grand reminder of a past era of motion picture palaces.³ Contributing to its grandeur was the addition of twelve oil canvas paintings by a local artist, Joseph Knowles.⁴

Originally, the Liberty's lobby was lined with black and gold velour curtains manufactured by the Frankchilds Company of Portland.¹ Today, it is believed that the original stage curtain hangs behind the current movie screen, and is also supposed to have been manufactured by the Frankchilds Company.

Many of the existing light fixtures in the theater, including the 15-foot diameter, 1200 pound main house fixture, are believed to be the creation of Fred Baker. Mr. Baker was an artisan who lived in, and worked out of Portland, Oregon. Among his many works are the fixtures in the entry hall of the Pittock Mansion in Portland. Before his recent death, he helped with the restoration of his fixtures in that historic mansion. Mr. Baker apparently did other work for the architectural firm of Bennes & Herzog, who were the architects for the Astor Building.⁴

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .21 acres

Quadrangle name Astoria, Oregon-Washington

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	0	4	3	6	0	5	5	5	1	1	5	1	6	5
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 Astor Building located in Section 8, Township 8 N , Range 9 West of the Willamette Meridian, occupies Lots 1 and 2 of Block 62, McClure's Addition to Astoria, Clatsop County, Oregon, otherwise known as Tax Lot 57.

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

state None code county code

state None code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John Goodenberger and Robert Steinmann

organization University of Oregon date December 12, 1983

street & number Department of Architecture telephone (503)

city or town Eugene state Oregon

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.

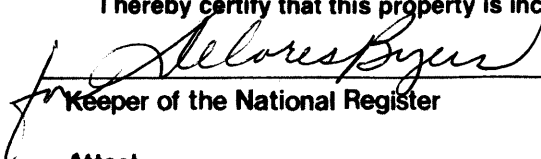
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date July 7, 1984

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

Entered in the National Register


Keeper of the National Register

date 9/7/84

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Ownership

The Astor Building was built by two prominent men of the West Coast Theater business - Claude Jensen and John von Herberg. They owned a chain of 31-33 movie theaters in Centralia, Sunnyside, Bremerton, Olympia, Tacoma, Seattle, Renton, Yakima, Bellingham, and Enumclaw, Washington; Butte and Great Falls, Montana; Portland and Astoria, Oregon.⁵ "Claude S. Jensen (1881-1950) was born in Richmond, Utah; attended Utah Agricultural College, and worked as a brakeman and conductor for the Northern Pacific Railroad before entering the theater business in 1907 in Missoula, Montana."⁵ In 1908, he moved to Los Angeles where he bought the Plaza Theater. Later, he bought the Los Angeles "Bijou" and Long Beach Columbia. In 1911, he moved to Tacoma, where he formed a partnership with John von Herberg. In 1918, Mr. Jensen moved to Portland, Oregon."⁵ Although he sold the bulk of his theaters in 1926, he owned four theaters in Seattle and six in Yakima at the time of his death. While talking on the phone, Mr. Jensen accidentally shot himself and was killed. He was 68.⁵

"John G. von Herberg (1877-1947) was born in Peru, Indiana."⁵ In 1911, he bought out Jensen's original partner of the National Theater in Seattle and they formed the firm Jensen and von Herberg. At the age of 70, Mr. von Herberg died in Seattle.⁵

Jensen and von Herberg built the Liberty Theater in Seattle (1914); the Liberty Theater, Astoria (1925); the Hollywood Theater, Portland (1926); the Bagdad Theater, Portland (1927); all richly ornamented, and Jensen was responsible for having the Portland Paramount constructed.⁵ In 1926, Jensen & von Herberg sold the chain of movie theaters for \$6,000,000 to the North American Theater Corporation.⁵

"When the Broadway Theater in Portland was under construction in 1926, the eastern booking agents considered it a sell out on the part of the owners, North American Theater Corporation, because it was for movies only and could not be used for Vaudeville". . . "After purchasing the Jensen & von Herberg properties, NATC became the largest independent theater owner west of the Mississippi."⁵

Although documentation was not found; it is believed that the Liberty was part of the package sold to NATC by Jensen & von Herberg in 1926. The years 1926-1972 are not documented, but in 1972 Sidney Zetosch is on record as th holder of the deed. Then, in 1978, the deed was transferred to T & S Enterprises. The current owner Sven Sundstrom, acquired the deed in 1982.

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Architects

The architect for the Astor building was the Portland firm of Bennes & Herzog, partners from 1921-1931.^{5,6} "John Bennes (1867-1943), was a native of Peru, Illinois. He moved to Chicago as a child and received his education in the public schools." "As a young man he took his architectural training in Prague, Bohemia, returning to Chicago to begin his professional career in 1890."⁵ Ten years later he moved to Baker, Oregon and opened his office there. He moved again in 1906 to Portland, and from 1914-1925 he practiced alone, admitting Harry Herzog into the partnership in 1925. They worked together for six years after which Mr. Bennes practiced alone. He maintained an office in Portland until 1941.⁵

Herman A. (Harry) Herzog (1893-1979), a native of Tyler, Texas, moved to Portland at the age of fifteen. He attended Washington High School in Portland. From 1913 until 1916, Mr. Herzog worked as a draftsman in the office of J. Y. Bennes, moving to the Northwest Galvanizing & Engineering Co. in 1918. He left Portland for Philadelphia approximately 1919, where he entered the University of Pennsylvania as a special student in architecture. Mr. Herzog returned to the office of Bennes in 1923. He continued as a draftsman for two years, becoming a partner in 1925.⁵ The Astor Building is apparently the first theater commission for Mr. Herzog.

During the period when Mr. Herzog was a draftsman for Bennes, through their partnership, Bennes & Herzog produced many notable works, the Maeghly House in Portland (1915); the Hollywood Theater, Portland (1926), both National Register properties; the Bagdad Theater, Portland (1927); the Administration Building for La Grande Normal School (now Eastern Oregon College, La Grande, 1929); and the Administration Building for the Ashland Normal School (now Southern Oregon College, Ashland).^{5,6}

The Astor Building is the only known work of Bennes & Herzog in Astoria. "Since the time the new Liberty Theater was first taking shape, as the plasterers and carpenters pounded out their work on the exterior of the building, the citizens of Astoria have looked upon it as one of the outstanding assets of the city."¹ Since the opening of the Liberty, Saturday, April 4, 1925, Astoria's commercial district has gone through few architectural changes. The Astor Building currently occupies the second largest site (.21 acres) in the downtown area. In 1979, Emmit Pierce of "The Daily Astorian" stated, "Today the theater at the corner of 12th and Commercial is a bit tarnished by time, but the structure has retained its timeless beauty. . ." "Spawned from the ashes of the great fire of 1922. Astoria's Liberty Theater stands as a monument to the golden age of motion picture palaces."³

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Artist

During the great Astoria fire of 1922, much of the town's notable artwork was destroyed. The Liberty was the first theater to be constructed after the fire and the twelve Knowles' canvasses helped to make it the new showcase of the Oregon coast.⁸

At a time when Americans were crying out for a hero, Joe Knowles was "naked and alone in the great (north) woods."⁹ In 1913, the unknown artist was sparked by a dream to test man's ability to survive against the brutal forces of nature. Backed by the Boston Post, Knowles left all the comforts of civilization and plunged into the Maine wilderness. Joe made his adventures known via charcoal and birch bark sketches and notes which he left behind on his trek. Reporters would find them and every day or so the Boston Posts' syndicated stories about the nature man hit the newsstands all over the United States. Joe became a hero, repeating and successfully combating mother nature in several separate adventures. In 1914, while in the cougar infested mountains of the Oregon Siskiyou, the nature man's tales of adventure were suspended; the Kaiser had declared war on the Czar.⁹ Joe was annoyed, and perhaps with good reason. "What a lousy time to start a world war."⁹ There he was exposing his hide to the gnats and cougars, fighting a single-handed battle against all natural enemies of man, and Europe had to go and blow him off the front page.⁹

Joe retired from his adventures and although he was a New Englander, spent his last 20 years painting and sketching at his home on the remote shores of the Washington Coast. Joe died there October 21, 1942, in his eccentric Seaview home that he built with flotsam from wrecked ships, a project which took over two decades. Outside his gateway hung a sign "Stranger pause awhile, Joe Knowles."⁹

Other original paintings by Mr. Knowles still exist in the Columbia River region. A large restored painting of a picnic scene hangs in the Astoria Library. It originally hung in a drugstore in downtown Astoria and depicts a group of people who had rowed a boat to an island for a picnic. Sitting prominently in the corner of the painting is a carton of Frost Kist ice cream. The shop owner believed this ice cream would have melted by the time they got to the island. This disturbed the store owner so much that he donated the painting to the city. A group of paintings also exist in the lobby of the Montecello Hotel in Longview, Washington.

¹ Astoria Evening Budget, March 24, 1925, p. 5.

² Astoria Evening Budget, April 4, 1925, p. 1.

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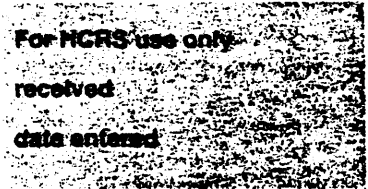
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- 3 Daily Astorian, July 13, 1979, p. 18.
- 4 Information from Sheila Finch-Tepper, AIA, November 1983, who is cataloguing the work of Mr. Baker.
- 5 National Register form, Hollywood Theater, Portland, by Sheila Finch-Tepper, AIA, March 25, 1983.
- 6 Revised National Register form, Hollywood Theater, Sheila Finch-Tepper, AIA.
- 7 Legal Description, Clatsop County Courthouse.
- 8 Astoria Evening Budget, March 31, 1925, p. 5.
- 9 Holbrook, Stewart H., Little Annie Oakley and Other Rugged People, the Original Nature Man, New York. The MacMillan Company, 1948.

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Astoria Evening Budget

- March 3, 1925, p. 5.
- March 24, 1925, p. 5.
- March 31, 1925, p. 5.
- April 4, 1925, p. 1.

Daily Astorian, July 13, 1979, p. 18.

Holbrook, Stewart H., Little Annie Oakley and Other Rugged People;
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Personal communication:

- Sheila Finch-Tepper, AIA, November, 1983.
- Michael Forter, October, 1983.
- Marjorie Halderman, October, 1983.

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Astor Building
1203 Commercial Street
Astoria, Clatsop County, Oregon

