

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Comanche Drive-In

other names/site number 5CF.2874

2. Location

street & number 17063 County Road 106 N/A not for publication

city or town Buena Vista X vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Chaffee code 015 zip code 81211

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

[Signature] Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer 6/11/15
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, History

Colorado
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

 other (explain:)

[Signature] 8.3.15
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Comanche Drive-In
Name of Property

Chaffee, Colorado
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	district
1	0	site
3	0	structure
0	0	object
6	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Drive-In Theater

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE
walls: STUCCO

roof: METAL

other: METAL

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Narrative Statement of Significance

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources, if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary

The 1967 Comanche Drive-In Theater, lying three miles west of the center of the small mountain town of Buena Vista at the southeast corner of Chaffee County Roads 306 and 339, covers about 9.4 acres (Photograph 1). The immediate vicinity of the drive-in consists of open, uncultivated land and scattered residences on large lots. Moviegoers enjoy a magnificent view of Mount Princeton and the Collegiate Range to the west. The Comanche displays those elements typically found in drive-ins, including: a massive screen tower; a combination projection booth/snack bar/restroom; ticket booth; attraction board/marquee sign; entrance and exit driveways; and parking/viewing area (see Figure 1 and Sketch Map). The drive-in retains its historic physical integrity.

Elaboration

Occupying about 9.4 acres in the southwest corner of a 40-acre parcel, the Comanche Drive-In takes advantage of its location at the intersection of two county roads. Moviegoers' vehicles enter and exit from County Road 339 on the west, with the entrance at the south end of the drive-in and the exit near its north end. A small illuminated entrance sign identifies the gravel two-lane entrance driveway, which is flanked by a wood post-and-board fence and extends east to two steel ranch gates just west of the small ticket booth (Photograph 2). One lane passes to the north of the ticket booth and the other to the south before merging east of the building. The projection booth/snack bar/restroom building lies just northeast of the ticket booth. Shrubs are present west and south of the building with a cluster of small trees to the east; southeast of the building is a well that supplies water to the facility.¹ The large vehicle parking/viewing area is located between the projection booth/snack bar/restroom building and the screen tower to the north. Gravel perimeter drives pass along the east and west sides of the parking area and pass just north of the screen, providing access to the exit west-northwest of the screen (Photograph 3). A barbed wire fence on metal posts borders the outside edge of the perimeter drives. The attractions board/marquee sign is present within the northwest corner of the nominated area adjacent to the south edge of County Road 306. The nominated area contains six resources, all of which are assessed as contributing (see Table 1).

Parking/Viewing Area, Map Reference 1, 1967, Site, Contributing, Photographs 4 through 7.

The large vehicle parking/viewing area contains ten shallow concave-arc'd rows facing the screen tower to the north (Photograph 4). Present owner John D. Groy estimates the drive-in's maximum capacity at about 200 to 210 vehicles. Parking in the rows is arc'd to orient vehicle sightlines to the screen with each row slightly inclined to permit succeeding rows to see over those in front (Photograph 5). Grasses, forbs, and cacti are present atop the raised rows, and driveways between rows are graveled. Illuminated row light posts near the center of the area identify each row by number (Photograph 6). Steel speaker posts and hangers are present, but speakers are no longer attached. Each post originally held two speakers, with adjacent cars mounting a speaker in either the driver or passenger window, as appropriate. A pair of airport landing lights mounted on a pole attached to the north wall of the projection booth illuminates the parking area. Northeast of the projection booth/snack bar/restroom building is a triangular landscaped area with a shrub and grasses, bordered with small boulders and a fence consisting of wood posts linked by chains. A sign instructing patrons to "Please Turn Off Lites" is at the west side of the area (Photograph 7).

Alterations. Most of the in-car speakers were removed in the late 1990s, following an industry-wide trend, when the drive-in began transmitting film audio via a low-power FM signal received by each vehicle's radio. The remaining speakers were removed in 2002.

¹ Only real property, not water rights (per 36 CFR 60.6), is the subject of this nomination.

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Projection Booth/Snack Bar/Restroom Building, Map Reference 2, 1967 and ca. 1970-71, Building, Contributing, Photographs 8 through 12.

The Comanche's multi-function building was typical of drive-ins. Drive-in historians Don and Susan Sanders reported that by the early 1950s "a centralized food service area soon became part of any drive-in theater layout, oftentimes built adjacent to the projection booth and rest rooms."² The two-story, rectangular projection booth/snack bar/restroom building (30' x 20') is located on the north side of the entrance driveway at the south edge of the viewing/parking area. The building has a concrete foundation. The first story is composed of concrete blocks covered with textured stucco, while second story walls are clad with wood board-and-batten siding. The widely overhanging shallow-pitch shed roof is clad with standing seam metal and slopes from north to south. All windows are metal frame unless otherwise indicated.

North Wall (Facing the Screen). The west half of the upper story has a tall two-part sliding window at the west end and then a short two-light sliding window (Photograph 8). The east half has two short two-light sliding windows alternating with two square film projection openings. A metal pole near the center of the upper story holds two airport landing lights and a television antenna used to transmit the FM signal carrying the film sound. On the first story is an off-center flush door (with a sign reading "SNACK BAR") with a tall two-part window to the west. A flat hood at the bottom of the second story extends across this section of the wall to shelter patrons waiting for snacks and wraps onto the west wall. East of the door is a short two-light sliding window.

West Wall. The second story contains a short two-light sliding window near the south end and a tall two-part window at the north end. A narrow full-width flat hood is present at the bottom of the upper story. The first story has a plate glass and two-part window to the south and a flush pedestrian door at the north end.

South Wall. The south wall second story contains a center inset area with an angled wall; there is a paneled door on the angled north wall and a flush door on the east wall (Photograph 9). The entrance opens onto a wood deck accessed from the ground by wood stairs from the west and supported by two square wood posts. A short two-light sliding window lies west of the entrance. The first story contains a center flush door with a short two-light sliding window to the east.

East Wall. The second story of the east wall has two short two-light sliding windows. The first story contains the drive-in's restrooms, accessed by wood paneled doors (the north one for women and the south one for men). At the south end of the wall is a short two-light sliding window.

Interior. The east third of the first story contains separate restrooms for men and women and a small generator room containing a RCA generator to convert incoming electricity to the 90-volt direct current needed to power the projectors.

The western portion of the first story is occupied by the snack bar (Photograph 10). An east-west serving counter near the south wall separates the service area from the customer area to the north. The service area contains the original service counter, refrigerator, cash register, a ca. 1951 Manley Aristocrat Model 32 brand popcorn machine, and a vintage Star brand hot dog cooker.³ The ceiling is composed of polished wood planks and beams. The floor is green-tinted concrete.

The eastern portion of the second story houses the projection booth, the working heart of the drive-in. All equipment is branded with the RCA label and includes two 1950s-era 35mm Simplex reel-to-reel film projectors that point through fixed single-light windows toward the screen. The projectors run on direct current and feature Bausch and Lomb anamorphic Cinemascope lenses and Ashcraft air-cooled lamphouses with carbon arc lamps, a once common technology now used in only a small number of drive-ins or indoor theaters (Photograph 11).

² Don and Susan Sanders, *The American Drive-In Movie Theater* (Osceola, Wisconsin: Motorbooks International, 1997), 74.

³ Ross Fink, Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois, email to Thomas H. Simmons, 6 November 2014; www.ManleyPopcornMachine.com, accessed 5 November 2014; Barb Groy, Buena Vista, email to Thomas H. Simmons, 7 November 2014. Manley, Inc., Kansas City, Missouri, manufactured the popcorn machine. Ross Fink provided information on the model number and estimated manufacturing year.

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The lamp rods “are similar to arc-welding rods. A white ‘flame’ is produced as the rods nearly touch. And like an arc-welder, the rods diminish as the flame burns. Large red knobs make minute adjustments in the length of the rods, keeping the white-hot flame at the correct level and angle.”⁴ Each feature-length presentation consists of five to six reels of film. As one reel nears its end, the projectionist starts the next reel on the second projector by synchronizing it with small black dots appearing in the upper right of each frame.⁵ A one watt FM radio transmitter in the projection booth broadcasts the film sound to car radios tuned to 98.7 FM.⁶ Ceiling vents are positioned above each projector. The projection booth also contains a work table for splicing film with a rack for movie reels below and a rewind machine in the southeast corner (Photograph 12). The west portion of the second story contains an apartment.

Alterations. An open deck originally occupied the second story west of the projection booth. In about 1970-71, the west portion was filled in with an apartment, an angled entrance was created, and the original flat roof was replaced with a slightly sloping shed roof. The metal roofing was added in about 2012.⁷

Ticket Booth, Map Reference 3, 1967, Building, Contributing, Photographs 13 and 14.

The small square one-story concrete block ticket booth (6' x 6') stands in the center of the entrance driveway from County Road 339, an arrangement permitting two lanes of cars to enter at the same time, with tickets dispensed from both sides of the booth. The building has a concrete foundation. The west wall contains a fixed single-light window with a plain wood surround. The north and south walls each have a small two-light metal window (lower part slides upwards) with a projecting counter with rounded corners. The east wall contains a center flush door. Slender white neon lights are present along the top of the north, south, and west walls. The ticket booth has a flat roof with widely overhanging eaves. There are no apparent alterations.

Drive-in Screen Tower, Map Reference 4, 1967, Structure, Contributing, Photographs 15 through 17.

The huge 60'-high prefabricated screen tower stands near the north edge of the viewing/parking area facing south and is tipped slightly downward to facilitate film viewing. The 80'-wide x 40'-high screen is composed of metal panels with narrow corrugations covered with Sherwin Williams 100 white paint on its face. The screen is attached to five 6"-diameter steel posts anchored deeply in 6' x 8' reinforced concrete bases. Five angled steel posts also set in concrete are attached to the vertical posts and connecting bracing provides more support against high winds. The present owner believes Selby Products of Richfield, Ohio, erected the screen tower. There are no apparent alterations.

Unlike many drive-in screen towers, that of the Comanche did not receive decoration or lettering on its reverse to draw attention to the facility. Roadside architecture historian Chester Liebs noted that tower backs were sometimes ornamented with neon lighting and/or mimetic or regional imagery. After the mid-1950s, operators increasingly relied on screen towers that were prefabricated by a manufacturer and assembled on site.⁸

Attraction Board/Marquee Sign, Map Reference 5, 1967, Structure, Contributing, Photographs 18 and 19.

A free-standing illuminated attraction board/marquee sign is located near the northwest corner of the property adjacent to County Road 306. The double-sided metal sign reads “COMANCHE” and includes a circle in the upper corner containing the stylized profile of a Native American wearing braids and a headband with two feathers. An arrow emerges from the bottom of the circle and points south toward the drive-in. The bottom portion of the sign is a grid where the titles of films can be displayed. Two metal posts support the sign; board catwalks with triangular braces are present just below the marquee to provide access to the sign when changing film titles.

⁴ Austin Richardson, “Romance by Carbon-Arc Lights at the Drive In,” *Vail Daily*, 24 July 2003.

⁵ John D. Groy, Buena Vista, Colorado, interview by R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, 16 September 2014.

⁶ For a video on how a carbon arc projector operates, see John Gilbert, “How to Run Old Carbon Arc Film Projectors,” 18 July 2008, www.youtube.com, accessed 28 August 2014. The radio signal is low power in order to avoid interference outside the immediate area of the drive-in.

⁷ John D. Groy, Buena Vista, Colorado, telephone interview by Thomas H. Simmons, 3 September 2014.

⁸ Chester Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1985), 160 and 163.

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Liebs describes the drive-in marquee or attraction board, located near the edge of the principal roadway, as the second most important attention-getting device for drive-ins; the first was the screen tower:

These double-sided signs, designed to catch the traffic from both directions, bore the illuminated name of the theater, a translucent message panel giving the name of the current show, and key selling phrases such as 'Technicolor,' 'pony rides,' 'free diaper service,' or other enticements. . . [B]y evoking the image of a theater marquee, the attraction board bestowed upon the drive-in the visual power of that universal symbol that automatically signals "movies."⁹

Alterations. John D. Groy reports the sign was modified a few years ago so that only its east side (facing Buena Vista) is now illuminated.

Well, Map Reference 6, 1966, Structure, Contributing, Photograph 9.

The 75' deep Groy Well No. 1, drilled in 1966, supplies water to the facility. Located southeast of the projection booth/snack bar/restroom building, the structure is composed of concrete blocks, measures 6' x 8', and is about 1' tall. Rolled asphalt roofing covers the top, which features a raised access hatch. There are no apparent alterations.¹⁰

Integrity

The Comanche Drive-In maintains excellent historic physical integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The drive-in is in its original location, has an unaltered setting, and displays the same layout of features and buildings.

Location

The locational integrity of the drive-in is excellent, as it remains in its original location.

Design

The design of the drive-in remains intact. Changes to the projection booth/snack bar/restroom building occurred within the period of significance. The pole-mounted speakers were removed in the late 1990s or early 2000s, but speaker poles and hangers are still present. The pragmatic nature of the design reduced the amount of the initial investment and shows the beautiful natural setting to its best advantage.

Materials

The drive-in maintains excellent integrity of materials with no nonhistoric materials introduced.

Workmanship

The drive-in displays sturdy, utilitarian workmanship, representative of 1960s design and construction, with the only ornamentation displayed in the highway sign and a small amount of neon on the ticket booth. Members of the Groy family assisted in the construction of the facility, with the goal of erecting a rural community drive-in possessing all functional requirements while minimizing the capital outlay.

Setting

The setting of the drive-in remains quite intact. Dramatic views of Mount Princeton and the Collegiate Range to the west provide the Comanche with a magnificent venue. The rural nature of the surrounding landscape is maintained. While more housing is present in the vicinity of the drive-in than at the time of its construction, the area is still relatively undeveloped.

Feeling

The nominated area retains excellent integrity in the aspect of feeling, possessing all of the elements historically expected in a small-town drive-in theater, including the towering screen, graveled parking area, and projection booth/snack bar/restroom building. The ambiance of the latter building is enhanced by the continued use of original equipment, including a popcorn machine and projectors.

⁹ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 161.

¹⁰ The well is water structure number 5215 in Water Division 2, Water District 11.

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Association

Members of the Groy family continue to operate the Comanche Drive-In, which still follows the same operating season during summer months that it originally did, providing film entertainment to local residents and visitors to the Buena Vista area. The drive-in provides a direct link to the golden age of these outdoor movie theaters in the decades following World War II.

Table 1
Resources within the Comanche Drive-In Historic District

Map Reference No.	Historic Resource Name	Resource Type	Contributing Status
1	Drive-In Grounds (1967)	Site	Contributing
2	Projection Booth/Snack Bar/Restroom Building (1967-71)	Building	Contributing
3	Ticket Booth (1967)	Building	Contributing
4	Drive-In Screen (1967)	Structure	Contributing
5	Attraction Board/Marquee Sign (1967)	Structure	Contributing
6	Well (1967)	Structure	Contributing

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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

ARCHITECTURE

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1967-82

Significant Dates

1970-71

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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 grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance extends from 1967 (the year the drive-in opened) through 1982 (the drive-in's most successful year).

Criteria Considerations (justification)

The Comanche Drive-In is not yet fifty years old. However, it meets the requirement for exceptional significance under Criteria Consideration G. Drive-in theaters are a rapidly vanishing property type; to date, only four drive-ins have been listed in the National Register throughout the country—none in Colorado. Only seven drive-ins including the Comanche are still operating in Colorado and only about 338 nationally.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Summary

The 1967 Comanche Drive-In Theater is significant under Criterion A in the area of Entertainment/Recreation for its role in providing outdoor cinema to the Buena Vista area since 1967. As the only drive-in ever to operate in Chaffee County, the Comanche brought this popular entertainment form and social phenomenon to the central Colorado mountains. The property is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an example of an increasingly rare roadside resource type: a mid-twentieth century small-town drive-in theater. The Comanche is also notable for its continuing use of a carbon arc lamp projection system—one of the few drive-ins in the nation still employing that technology.

Elaboration

Criterion A

Experienced indoor movie theater operators John L. and Pearl Groy brought drive-in entertainment to the Buena Vista area in 1967 with their construction of the Comanche Drive-In. Invented in 1932, drive-in theater construction took off after World War II and peaked in the late 1950s, enjoying great popularity with Baby Boom families and constituting a significant mid-century social and entertainment phenomenon. Historians Don and Susan Sanders observed that “the drive-in theater has become a piece of American nostalgia. . . . one of America’s great icons. It represents youth, freedom, and a national reverence for the automobile.”¹¹ The Comanche Drive-In is significant as a rural example of this historical development. Buoyed by a strong local economy, the drive-in enjoyed its peak years in the early 1980s and continues to serve residents and visitors to the Buena Vista area.

Criterion C

The Comanche Drive-In is also significant in the area of Architecture in representing the layout and components of a mid-twentieth century small-town drive-in theater, as reflected in the massive screen tower, rows of parking with speaker poles, attractions board/sign marquee, multipurpose projection building, ticket booth, and circulation system for entering and exiting. The functional requirements of outdoor film exhibition necessitated a response that produced a readily recognizable roadside resource type. The 1967 Comanche is a relatively late example of a drive-in, built after the peak in drive-in construction. It is Chaffee County’s only extant drive-in and the highest drive-in in elevation in the nation at 8,040’.¹² Drive-in theaters are a rapidly disappearing resource type. Once numbering more than 4,000 throughout the country, there are now only 338 still open. Colorado once boasted more than sixty drive-ins; today, the Comanche Drive-In is one of seven still operating.¹³

Nationally, just four drive-in theaters are currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the Spud Drive-In, Driggs, Teton County, Idaho (listed 2003, NRIS 99001475); 66 Drive-In, Carthage, Jasper County, Missouri (listed 2003, NRIS 03000182); Beverly Drive-In Theatre, Hattiesburg, Forrest County, Mississippi (listed 2008, NRIS 08000761); and 99W Drive-In Theatre, Newberg, Yamhill County, Oregon (listed 2014, NRIS 14000401).¹⁴ Each of these nominations emphasized the dwindling number of drive-ins and their

¹¹ Sanders and Sanders, *The American Drive-In Movie Theater*, 146 and 155-56.

¹² Comanche Drive-In website, www.comanchedrivein.com, accessed 5 August 2014.

¹³ www.Drive-ins.com, accessed 5 August 2014; www.bigscreen.com, accessed 6 November 2014; *Denver Post*, 29 August 2010; Comanche Drive-In website, www.comanchedrivein.com, accessed 5 August 2014. Other Colorado drive-ins still open in 2014 are: the 88 (1972), Commerce City; Holiday Twin (1968), Fort Collins; Mesa (1951), Pueblo; Star (1949), Montrose; Star (1964), Monte-Vista; and Tru-Vu (1954), Delta.

¹⁴ In addition, Idaho SHPO staff prepared a ca. 1999 Multiple Property Documentation Form for Drive-In Theaters in Idaho that was not accepted by the National Park Service.

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consequent rarity. The October 2010 destruction of the Beverly Drive-In by fire underscored the fragility of the resource type.¹⁵

The Comanche Drive-In additionally is notable for its continued use of carbon arc lamps in its projectors. While most drive-ins still using reel-to-reel projection systems have converted to less labor intensive Xenon lamps, the Comanche is one of at most a handful across the country still employing carbon arc lamps. The purer, whiter light generated by carbon-arc lamps, similar to that of sunlight, “afforded the best natural-looking light source for both filming movies and projecting them.”¹⁶

The Invention and Growth of Drive-In Theaters

Roadside architectural historian Chester Liebs described the singular origins of drive-in theaters:

While most roadside building types evolved gradually, the drive-in theater was deliberately invented. It took shape from a single prototype and—except for technological improvements and minor variations in plan, construction and decoration—has remained basically unchanged in form and function for half a century.¹⁷

Richard M. Hollingshead Jr. of Camden, New Jersey, invented the drive-in, submitting a patent application in August 1932 that gained government approval in May 1933. Drive-in historians Don and Susan Sanders observed Hollingshead found a means “to combine America’s two great love affairs—the automobile and the movies.”¹⁸ In developing his application Hollingshead experimented with a projector in his home driveway to solve the problem of cars closer to the screen blocking the view of those to the rear. His patent (number 1909537) envisioned “a series of ramps that would place the cars at proper angles for optimum viewing. The ramps themselves would be placed on an incline and arranged in a semicircle around the screen.”¹⁹

Patent in hand, Hollingshead and his cousin, Willie Warren Smith, formed the Park-In Theaters company and opened the nation’s first drive-in theater in Camden, New Jersey, in June 1933. Admission prices were 25¢ a car and 25¢ per person. Drive-in historian Kerry Segrave concluded the 336-car Camden facility “was not unlike the thousands that would follow. Cars entered past a ticket booth, then took a spot on ramps laid out in the familiar fan or clamshell pattern. The major difference was the lack of individual speakers.”²⁰ The Camden also featured guardrails at the end of each ramp, requiring cars to reverse to depart.

Drive-in construction faced the challenge of converting the layout of an indoor theater “to a system that replaced regular theater seats with automobiles.”²¹ This required the “invention” of such components as screen towers, concession stands, ticket booths, speakers, and speaker poles. Delivering quality sound to patrons while limiting auditory disturbance to adjoining property owners proved particularly vexing. Early drive-ins like the Camden initially utilized several centrally-located speakers broadcasting film sound to the entire parking area. RCA developed a speaker mounted in individual car windows in 1941, but World War II delayed its adoption until after the conflict.

Hollingshead saw his drive-in concept as a means of overcoming reasons people gave for not attending films by liberating them from social norms expected in traditional indoor theaters:

¹⁵ *Hattiesburg American*, 30 October 2010. The drive-in does not appear to have been delisted from the National Register.

¹⁶ Gordon R. Bachlund, email to Thomas H. Simmons, 20 November 2014; Gordon R. Bachlund, “Carbon Arc Theatres: A Living List,” 27 September 2012, www.ScreeningRoomServices.com, accessed 20 November 2014. In 2012 engineer Gordon R. Bachlund identified only twenty indoor theaters nationally still using carbon arc lamps. Contacted for this project, he said he knew of only one drive-in in Massachusetts using the technology but indicated there might be more not known to him.

¹⁷ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 153.

¹⁸ Sanders and Sanders, *The American Drive-In Movie Theater*, 13.

¹⁹ Elizabeth McKeon and Linda Everett, *Cinema Under the Stars: America’s Love Affair with the Drive-In Movie Theater* (Nashville, Tennessee: Cumberland House, 1998), 10.

²⁰ Kerry Segrave, *Drive-In Theaters: A History from Their Inception in 1933* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 1992), 8.

²¹ Mark Bialek, president of the Drive-In Theater Fan Club, foreword, ix, in McKeon and Everett, *Cinema Under the Stars*.

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Inveterate smokers rarely enjoy a movie because of the smoking prohibition. In the Drive-In theatre one may smoke without offending others. People may chat or even partake of refreshments brought in their cars without disturbing those who prefer silence. The Drive-In theatre idea virtually transforms an ordinary motor car into a private theatre box. . . . Here the whole family is welcome, regardless of how noisy the children are apt to be and parents are furthermore assured of the children's safety because youngsters remain in the car. The aged and infirm will find the Drive-In a boon because they will not be subjected to inconvenience such as getting up to leave others pass in narrow aisles or the uncertainty of a seat.²²

Hollingshead's Camden facility drew national media attention, and drive-ins sprang up across the country, with fifty to sixty operating by 1938 and ninety-five by early 1942. While some operators recognized Hollingshead's patent and paid to use the concept, most did not, and a lengthy legal battle by Hollingshead to enforce his patent ensued. In 1949 the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit ruled against Hollingshead, finding that the drive-in concept was not "inventive," but merely an adaptation of conventional theater seating dating to antiquity and therefore not patentable. The Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal of the decision.²³

The move to build "ozoners," as trade publications referred to the outdoor film venues, accelerated after World War II, stimulated by good economic times, increased emphasis on automobiles, and the rise of the Baby Boom generation. The number of drive-ins increased from 155 in 1947 to 820 in 1949 and peaked at about 4,063 in 1958. This growth occurred in the face of strong opposition from conventional indoor film exhibitors, who saw drive-ins as a threat to their profits, and despite the limited fare made available to drive-ins by studio distributors. The latter policy resulted in drive-ins mostly exhibiting second-run or B films, which nevertheless drew audiences who savored the drive-in experience.²⁴ In the view of drive-in historians McKeon and Everett, "it was the novelty of knowing that one could pack the family into the car and enjoy a night out, never having to get out of the car until arriving back at home."²⁵ Drive-in historians Don and Susan Sanders commented: "It was the sizzle that sold tickets at the drive-ins, not the movies they played."²⁶

Most drive-ins were constructed on urban fringes in suburban areas, where open land was plentiful and subdivisions were quickly filling with potential Baby Boom patrons. The convenience and informality of drive-ins appealed to young families with children, offering out-of-home entertainment without the expense of a babysitter or need to dress up. The privacy of drive-ins also appealed to dating teenagers, and critics labeled the facilities "passion pits" or "necker's hangouts."²⁷

The 1950s were the golden age of American drive-in theaters. Concession stands soon became profit centers for drive-ins, and operators could confidently expect 35 to 40 percent of total gross receipts to be generated by food and beverage sales.²⁸ Typical offerings included soda, French fries, hot dogs, corn dogs, candy bars, and cigarettes. Technological innovations emerged to enhance the drive-in experience, including in-car heaters, improved speaker sound, nets to keep insects out of open windows, glycerin solutions to improve visibility in rain, and improved popcorn machines for snack bars.²⁹ As the number of drive-ins increased some operators added amenities to draw patrons, including playgrounds, picnic facilities, bottle-warming stations, childcare, pony rides, dancing monkeys, boxing, live entertainment, and fireworks displays.³⁰

Beginning in the early 1960s the number of drive-in theaters began to decline rapidly: 3,502 venues in 1963; 2,882 in 1977; 2,129 in 1982; 999 in 1987; and 338 in 2014. Segrave opines the sharp 1958-63 drop resulted

²² Hollingshead quoted in Segrave, *Drive-In Theaters*, 7.

²³ Segrave, *Drive-In Theaters*, 14.

²⁴ Segrave, *Drive-In Theaters*, 18, 31, 33, and 76.

²⁵ McKeon and Everett, *Cinema Under the Stars*, 29.

²⁶ Sanders and Sanders, *The American Drive-In Movie Theater*, 45.

²⁷ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 158-59.

²⁸ Segrave, *Drive-In Theaters*, 46.

²⁹ McKeon and Everett, *Cinema Under the Stars*, 29.

³⁰ Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 158; Sanders and Sanders, *The American Drive-In Movie Theater*, 41-45; McKeon and Everett, *Cinema Under the Stars*, 30-32.

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from overbuilding and the departure of the least efficient and least profitable operators from the industry.³¹ Increasing land values of drive-in facilities made them ripe for redevelopment into other uses, including residential subdivisions, office parks, and shopping centers.³² As cities grew outward, light pollution from surrounding development began to hinder some drive-in operations. The 1960s and early 1970s were periods of “relative quiet” for drive-ins. According to Segrave, the steady drop from the late 1970s is attributable to a lack of business. The rise of multiplex indoor theaters in the late 1970s hurt drive-ins. The availability of VHS and DVD films, cable television, and streaming content and the growing size and sophistication of consumer media equipment provided Americans with even more informal and convenient entertainment alternatives.³³ As historian Kerry Segrave concluded; “While still alive and kicking today, just barely, the drive-in is very much dated. It belongs to the 1950s, the era of the Hula Hoop, of ‘Leave It to Beaver,’ of Ike, of the family, of the pinball machine, of huge cars guzzling cheap gas. They are all gone now.”³⁴

John L. and Pearl Groy Plan and Construct the Comanche Drive-In

John L. and Pearl Groy planned and built the Comanche Drive-In west of Buena Vista in 1967. Born in 1928 in Colorado, John grew up around movie theaters. His father, Lewis, operated the Ute Theater in Saguache, Colorado, from the 1940s to his retirement in 1970.³⁵ John came to Buena Vista in about 1949, and he and a partner opened the short-lived Pine Theater and confectionery ca.1950-51 on East Main Street. In about 1953-54 John and his wife Pearl converted a hardware store on East Main Street to the Pearl Theater. The family lived above the business on the second story. They also owned the Unique Theater in Salida. According to their son, John D., the couple always wanted to start a drive-in. Undertaking the project in 1967 after the drive-in theater’s peak of popularity in the late 1950s, the Groys realized the Comanche would be “quite a gamble.”³⁶

The elder Groy looked at land along U.S. Highway 24 in the Buena Vista vicinity before settling on the current site, which he believed was “one of the prettiest settings in the valley.”³⁷ The corner location had little ambient light disturbance, and the presence of two county roads facilitated patron access.³⁸ The couple acquired a forty-acre parcel, and Groy developed a plan for creating a drive-in in its southwest corner. Groy contracted with a specialized screen tower manufacturer to pre-fabricate parts, ship them to the site, and provide a crew to erect the tower supports. The crew assembled the massive screen on the ground before raising it into place using two cranes. The younger Groy believes the company was Selby Products of Richfield, Ohio, headed by Jerry Selby. The firm started installing drive-in screens in 1945, has manufactured thousands of screens, and is one of the few surviving firms specializing in the service.³⁹

Mr. Groy and his son assisted local contractors in construction of the theater buildings and in preparation of the parking/viewing area. His son believes a specialty manufacturer fabricated the Comanche Drive-In sign. The construction drew little notice in the local newspaper. In early May the *Chaffee County Republican* published a photo of the partially completed projection booth building, noting the “outdoor theatre” was still in “the embryo stage”⁴⁰ (see Figure 2). Groy acquired used equipment to outfit the drive-in. The 1950s vintage projectors were purchased from a Montrose, Colorado, drive-in. Other used equipment included a Star hot dog cooker, which came from the Pearl Theater, and a ca. 1951 Manley Aristocrat popcorn machine.

³¹ Segrave, *Drive-In Theaters*, 198-99.

³² Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 165.

³³ Segrave, *Drive-In Theaters*, 181 and 198-99.

³⁴ Segrave, *Drive-In Theaters*, 197.

³⁵ Ute Theater website, www.theutetheater.com, accessed 18 July 2013; Cecil Hall, “Remember When?”; *Saguache Crescent*, 12 June 1919, 31 December 1998, and 14 January 1999.

³⁶ Groy interview, 3 September 2014.

³⁷ Mark Wolfe, Austin, Texas, “Chaffee County, Buena Vista: Comanche Drive-In,” email to Thomas H. Simmons, 25 September 2011.

³⁸ Movie-going traffic congesting major roads became a frequent complaint against drive-ins nationally. The two Chaffee county roads had lower traffic volumes than U.S. Highway 24, thus facilitating arrivals and departures.

³⁹ Swan Drive-in Theater, Blue Ridge, Fannin County, Georgia, fannin.fetchyournews.com, accessed 22 September 2014.

⁴⁰ *Chaffee County Republican*, 5 May 1967, 7.

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John L. Groy desired a Native American name for the new drive-in, influenced by his father's choice of Ute for his Saguache theater. Initially preferring the name Sioux, he discovered several drive-ins already with that designation and eventually settled upon "Comanche."⁴¹ Colorado drive-in historian Mark Wolfe reported the name may have resulted from a local legend recounting the presence of a sole Comanche living in the area traditionally claimed as Ute territory.⁴²

Opening and Operation of the Comanche Drive-In

The Comanche Drive-In Theater opened on 13 July 1967 with a showing of *Island of Terror*, a 1966 British horror film starring Edward Judd, Peter Cushing, and Carole Gray.⁴³ Wolfe reported "the ramps proved to be a little too steep, and on opening night a few cars dragged bottom. But everything else went well, and the place was a success."⁴⁴ The venue showed two different films each week and was open daily from Memorial Day to Labor Day (see Figure 3). Other summer 1967 films screened included: *The Cool Ones*, *Hatari*, *First to Fight*, *Gambit*, *Wild on the Beach*, *Harper*, *The Alamo*, *Blindfold*, and *King Kong vs. Godzilla* and *Brides of Dracula* (a double-bill in late September).⁴⁵

The location's high elevation of 8,040' and its short summer dictated the limited operating season for the Comanche. Melanie Roth, whose family's ranch lies a short distance to the west, recalled she and her sisters rode horses to attend the drive-in: "We tied our horses directly to the speaker stands and had heavy coats and blankets. I am sure we were in the back row as we would have blocked the view of other movie goers."⁴⁶ A friend of Melanie's provided this recollection: "Oh my, I remember going to the drive-in many times when I was 16 to 18, mostly with local boys, but I am not sure that I ever watched a movie!"⁴⁷

John D. Groy reports the early 1980s (ca. 1982) were the busiest years for the drive-in. This was a time of brisk economic activity in the area, with the nearby Climax mine operating, as well as the State Reformatory. According to Wolfe, unlike many drive-ins, the Comanche did not stage special events, such as fireworks displays or celebrity appearances. The Comanche became the only film venue in the Buena Vista area in 1996, when the Groys closed their Pearl Theater.⁴⁸ In the late 1990s, most of the Comanche's pole-mounted RCA speakers were replaced by FM radio sound transmitted from the projection booth. The last forty speakers, retained for nostalgia, were put out of commission by a lightning strike in 2002 and removed.⁴⁹ The younger Groy noted the old speakers "were never loud enough and had a lot of buzz interference, but people didn't complain."⁵⁰

The drive-in remained open from 1967 through 2008 and closed for the 2009 through 2011 seasons (see Figures 4 and 5). It re-opened briefly during 2012 and operated full seasons in 2013 and 2014. In recent years, the Comanche has shown movies on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights. The season extends from Memorial Day through Labor Day, although good weather may prompt a mid-May opening and extend operations to the end of September. John D. and Barbara Groy and other family members still staff the drive-in. While the ticket booth contains two windows to accommodate two lanes of entering vehicles, typically only one window is open and manned by one person. One or two workers operate the concession stand, where snack prices remain

⁴¹ Groy interview, 16 September 2014.

⁴² Wolfe, "Chaffee County, Buena Vista: Comanche Drive-In."

⁴³ The 1965 year of construction provided by the County Assessor is incorrect.

⁴⁴ *Chaffee County Republican*, April-September 1967; Wolfe, "Chaffee County, Buena Vista: Comanche Drive-In." The first advertisement for films at the Comanche appeared in the 21 July 1967 issue of the *Chaffee County Republican*. No feature article discussing the opening of the facility could be located.

⁴⁵ *Chaffee County Republican*, 11 August 1967, 8 September 1967, and 22 September 1967.

⁴⁶ Melanie Roth, Buena Vista, Colorado, email to Tom and Laurie Simmons, 9 December 2014.

⁴⁷ Melanie Roth, Buena Vista, Colorado, email to Tom and Laurie Simmons, 9 December 2014.

⁴⁸ Another drive-in once operated in Chaffee County in Salida on the north side of U.S. Highway 50 toward the west end of town. It stopped operating in the 1980s and is no longer extant.

⁴⁹ Richardson, "Romance by Carbon-Arc Lights at the Drive In."

⁵⁰ *Chaffee County Times*, 15 June 2013.

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reasonable compared to those typically charged by indoor theaters. John D. indicates he likes children to be able to afford the candy. All of John and Barbara's sons have served as projectionists over the years.⁵¹

According to John D. Groy, the typical Comanche audience is split about fifty-fifty between area residents and out-of-towners visiting the Buena Vista area for summer vacations and recreation. Admission is \$8 for adults, \$3 for children five through twelve, and free for those under five. A good night's attendance is judged as fifty to seventy cars. Groy observed "we've never made a lot of money here," indicating maintaining the historic drive-in is a source of pride for the family and an amenity for the town.⁵² Drive-in historians Don and Susan Sanders reported in 1997 that drive-ins remained popular in America's small towns: "Perhaps it's a lack of local entertainment, or maybe it's still a rite of passage, like learning to ride a bike or taking your date to the Tastee-Freeze. But there's something about small town people that keeps them coming back to the drive-in. Maybe they just feel more at home there."⁵³

For the present, the Comanche Drive-In is able to obtain 35mm prints for screening on its carbon-arc lamp reel-to-reel projectors, but the film industry is moving toward digital projection. The cost of digital conversion would be about \$80,000.⁵⁴ Barbara Groy commented in 2013: "The Comanche Drive-In is a dinosaur, really one of a kind. Whether sitting in a car or in the back of a pickup under the starry sky, it is a great summer outing."⁵⁵

⁵¹ Richardson, "Romance by Carbon-Arc Lights at the Drive In."

⁵² Groy interview, 3 September 2014; About the Comanche, www.comanchedrivein.com, accessed 5 August 2014.

⁵³ Sanders and Sanders, *The American Drive-In Movie Theater*, 136.

⁵⁴ *Chaffee County Times*, 5 September 2013.

⁵⁵ *Chaffee County Times*, 15 June 2013.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Segrave, Kerry. *Drive-In Theaters: A History from Their Inception in 1933*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 1992.

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Wolfe, Mark. Austin, Texas. "Chaffee County, Buena Vista: Comanche Drive-In." Email to Thomas H. Simmons. 25 September 2011.

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 # _____

recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Buena Vista Heritage

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):
5CF.2874

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 9.4

Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.
(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Comanche Drive-In
Name of Property

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County and State

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>38.823785</u> Latitude:	<u>-106.184069</u> Longitude:	4	<u>38.821966</u> Latitude:	<u>-106.182184</u> Longitude:
2	<u>38.824087</u> Latitude:	<u>-106.183590</u> Longitude:	5	<u>38.821434</u> Latitude:	<u>-106.183028</u> Longitude:
3	<u>38.823074</u> Latitude:	<u>-106.182214</u> Longitude:	6	<u>38.821442</u> Latitude:	<u>-106.184087</u> Longitude:

OR

UTM References

 NAD 1927 or X NAD 1983

1	<u>13</u> Zone	<u>397214</u> Easting	<u>4297888</u> Northing	4	<u>13</u> Zone	<u>397375</u> Easting	<u>4297684</u> Northing
2	<u>13</u> Zone	<u>397256</u> Easting	<u>4297921</u> Northing	5	<u>13</u> Zone	<u>397301</u> Easting	<u>4297626</u> Northing
3	<u>13</u> Zone	<u>397374</u> Easting	<u>4297807</u> Northing	6	<u>13</u> Zone	<u>397209</u> Easting	<u>4297628</u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The nominated area, shown on the included to-scale map, comprises part of Chaffee County Assessor parcel number 326924200164 in the Northeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section 24, Township 14 South, Range 79 West, Buena Vista vicinity, Chaffee County, Colorado, more particularly described as follows: Beginning at the southwest corner of the parcel; thence north along the west edge of the parcel approximately 856' to the south right-of-way of Chaffee County Road 306; thence northeasterly along the right-of-way for approximately 172'; thence southeasterly for approximately 537'; thence south for approximately 404'; thence southwesterly for approximately 312' to the intersection of the south boundary of the parcel; and thence west along the south boundary of the parcel for approximately 301' to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundary includes that portion of the Assessor parcel historically associated with drive-in theater operations.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, Historians (for property owners)

organization Front Range Research Associates, Inc. date 30 January 2015 (Revised)

street & number 3635 W. 46th Avenue telephone 303-477-7597

city or town Denver state CO zip code 80211

e-mail frraden@msn.com website www.frhistory.com

Property Owner: (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name John L. Groy and John D. Groy

street & number P.O. Box 1046 telephone

city or town Buena Vista state CO zip code 81211

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Comanche Drive-In
City or Vicinity: Buena Vista
County: Chaffee State: Colorado
Photographer: Thomas H. Simmons
Date Photographed: October 2011 and September 2014

Number, camera direction, description of photographs, and date photographed:

- 1 of 19, view south-southeast, overview from County Road 306, showing (left to right) screen tower, projection booth/snack bar/restroom building, and attraction board/marquee sign. September 2014.
- 2 of 19, view east-northeast, entrance driveway from County Road 339, with projection booth/snack bar/restroom building and ticket booth in distance. September 2014.
- 3 of 19, view east-southeast, exit driveway from County Road 339 with the screen tower and viewing area in the distance. September 2014.
- 4 of 19, view north, parking/viewing area, speaker poles, and screen tower. October 2011.
- 5 of 19, view southeast, parking/viewing area, showing arcing and ramping of the rows. October 2011.
- 6 of 19, view north, parking/viewing area, row marker, and screen tower. October 2011.
- 7 of 19, view northeast, east portion of parking/viewing area and the triangular landscaped area. September 2014.
- 8 of 19, view southeast, projection booth/snack bar/restroom building (front [north] and west walls). September 2014.
- 9 of 19, view northwest, projection booth/snack bar/restroom building (rear and east walls) with well cover in foreground. September 2014.
- 10 of 19, view southeast, projection booth/snack bar/restroom building (interior, first story, snack bar counter). September 2014.
- 11 of 19, view west, projection booth/snack bar/restroom building (interior, second story, projection booth with John D. Groy threading a projector. September 2014.
- 12 of 19, view southwest, projection booth/snack bar/restroom building (interior, second story, projection booth, work table with film reel storage). September 2014.

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- 13 of 19, view northeast, ticket booth (west and south walls) with projection booth/snack bar/restroom building to left. September 2014.
- 14 of 19, view southwest, ticket booth (east and north walls) with entrance driveway to right. September 2014.
- 15 of 19, view northeast, screen tower from parking/viewing area with speaker pole in foreground. October 2011.
- 16 of 19, view west-southwest, rear of screen tower showing bracing with Mount Princeton to the left. October 2011.
- 17 of 19, view east-northeast, screen tower from side showing canting of screen toward parking/viewing area. October 2011.
- 18 of 19, view south-southwest, attraction board/marquee sign (east side) with projection booth/snack bar/restroom building in distance to left. September 2014.
- 19 of 19, view east-southeast, attraction board/marquee sign (west side). September 2014.

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Historic Figure Log

1 of 5, This Google Earth image of the Comanche Drive-In shows the layout of arced rows and access driveways. North is to the top. Courtesy Google Earth, 27 September 2013.

2 of 5, The *Chaffee County Republican* ran this photograph of the Comanche Drive-In's projection booth/snack bar/restroom building under construction in May 1967 (view east-southeast). The west portion of the second story was originally used as a deck; it was built out with an apartment ca. 1970-71. Courtesy of *Chaffee County Republican*, 5 May 1967, 7.

3, of 5, The first advertisement for films showing at the Comanche Drive-In appeared on 21 July 1967. During the summer, the Groys ran advertisements for films at the drive-in, as well as for different features at the Pearl Theater. Courtesy of *Chaffee County Republican*, 21 July 1967 (left) and 4 August 1967 (right).

4, of 5, This ca. mid-1970s-1980s Assessor image (view northeast) shows the west and south walls of the Projection/Snack Bar/Restroom Building after the ca. 1970-71 modifications to the second story. The post and board fence (left), metal ranch gates, and the roof of the ticket booth (extreme right) also appear. Courtesy of Chaffee County Assessor, Salida, Colorado.

5 of 5, This ca. 1990s southeast view from County Road 306 shows the attraction board/marquee sign, screen tower, and projection booth/snack bar/restroom building (right edge beneath the sign). *Lawnmower Man*, a science fiction film, was released in 1992. Courtesy of Thomas J. Noel, image AUR-950, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

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Figures

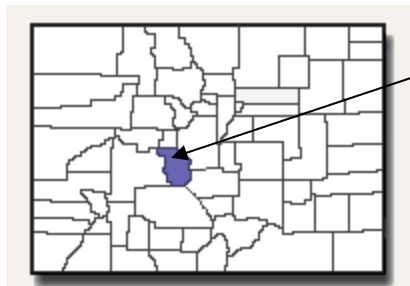
Location Map from Google Earth



The white polygon delineates the nominated area which has the following coordinates:

Point	Latitude	Longitude
1	38.823785	-106.184069
2	38.824087	-106.183590
3	38.823074	-106.182214
4	38.821966	-106.182184
5	38.821434	-106.184028
6	38.821442	-106.184087

Image Date: 27 September 2013 Datum: WGS84



State Perspective:
 Comanche Drive-In

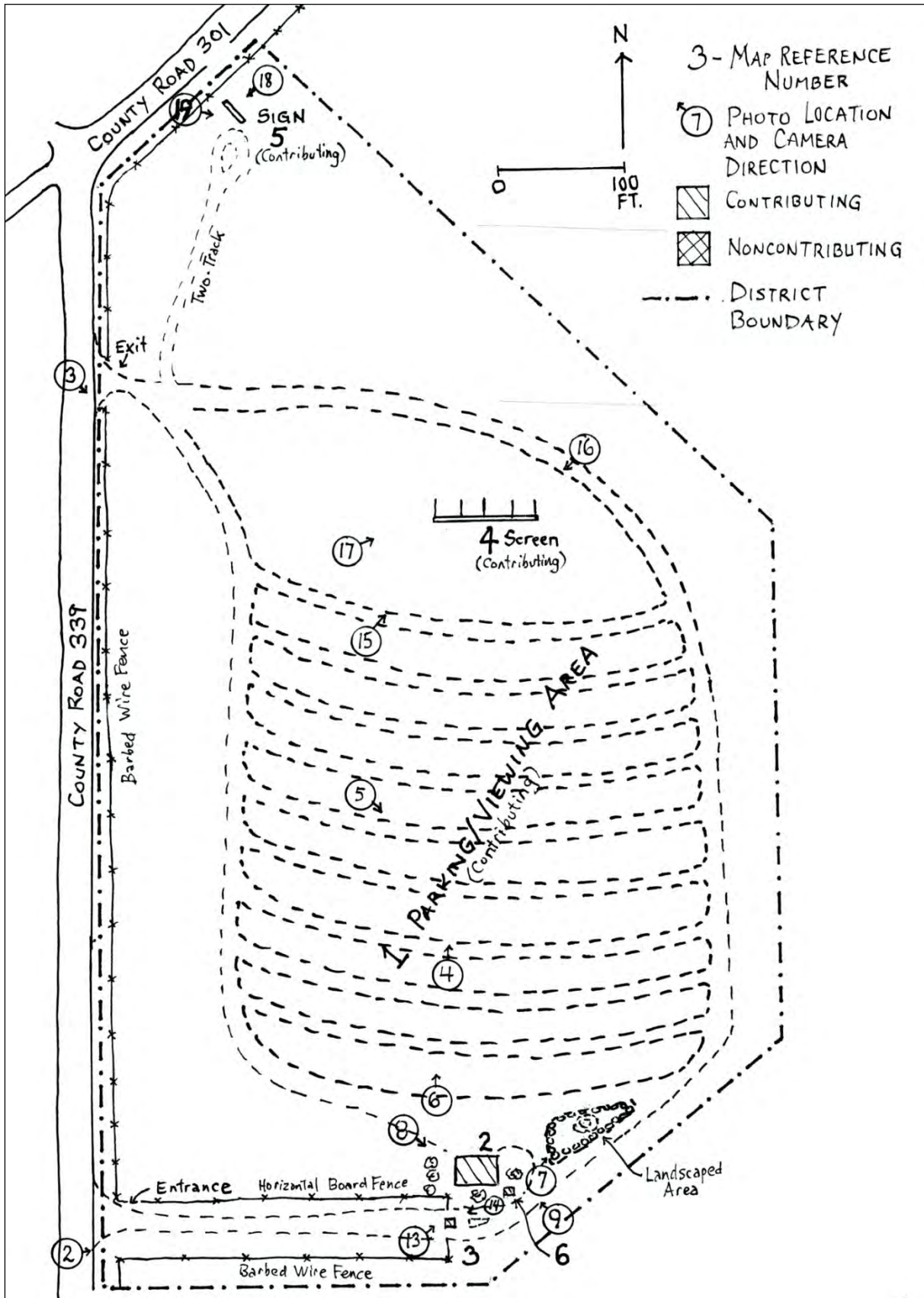
Comanche Drive-In

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Sketch Map



Comanche Drive-In

Chaffee, Colorado

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Figure 1. This Google Earth image of the Comanche Drive-In shows the layout of arced rows and access driveways. North is to the top. Courtesy of Google Earth, 27 September 2013.

Comanche Drive-In

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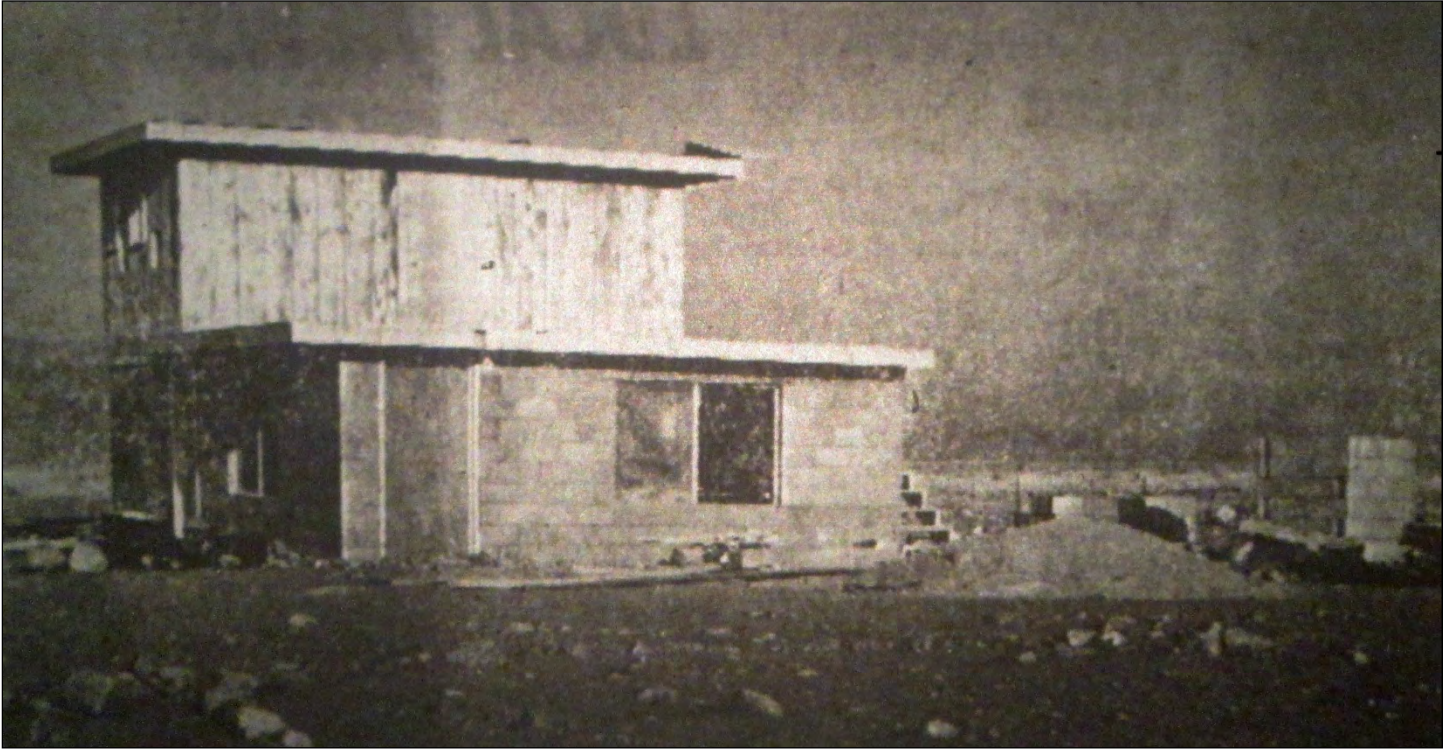


Figure 2. The *Chaffee County Republican* ran this photograph of the Comanche Drive-In's projection booth/snack bar/restroom building under construction in May 1967 (view east-southeast). The west portion of the second story was originally used as a deck; it was built out with an apartment ca. 1970-71. Courtesy of *Chaffee County Republican*, 5 May 1967, 7.

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Figure 3. The first advertisement for films showing at the Comanche Drive-In appeared on 21 July 1967. During the summer, the Groys ran advertisements for films at the drive-in, as well as for different features at the Pearl Theater. Courtesy of *Chaffee County Republican*, 21 July 1967 (left) and 4 August 1967 (right).

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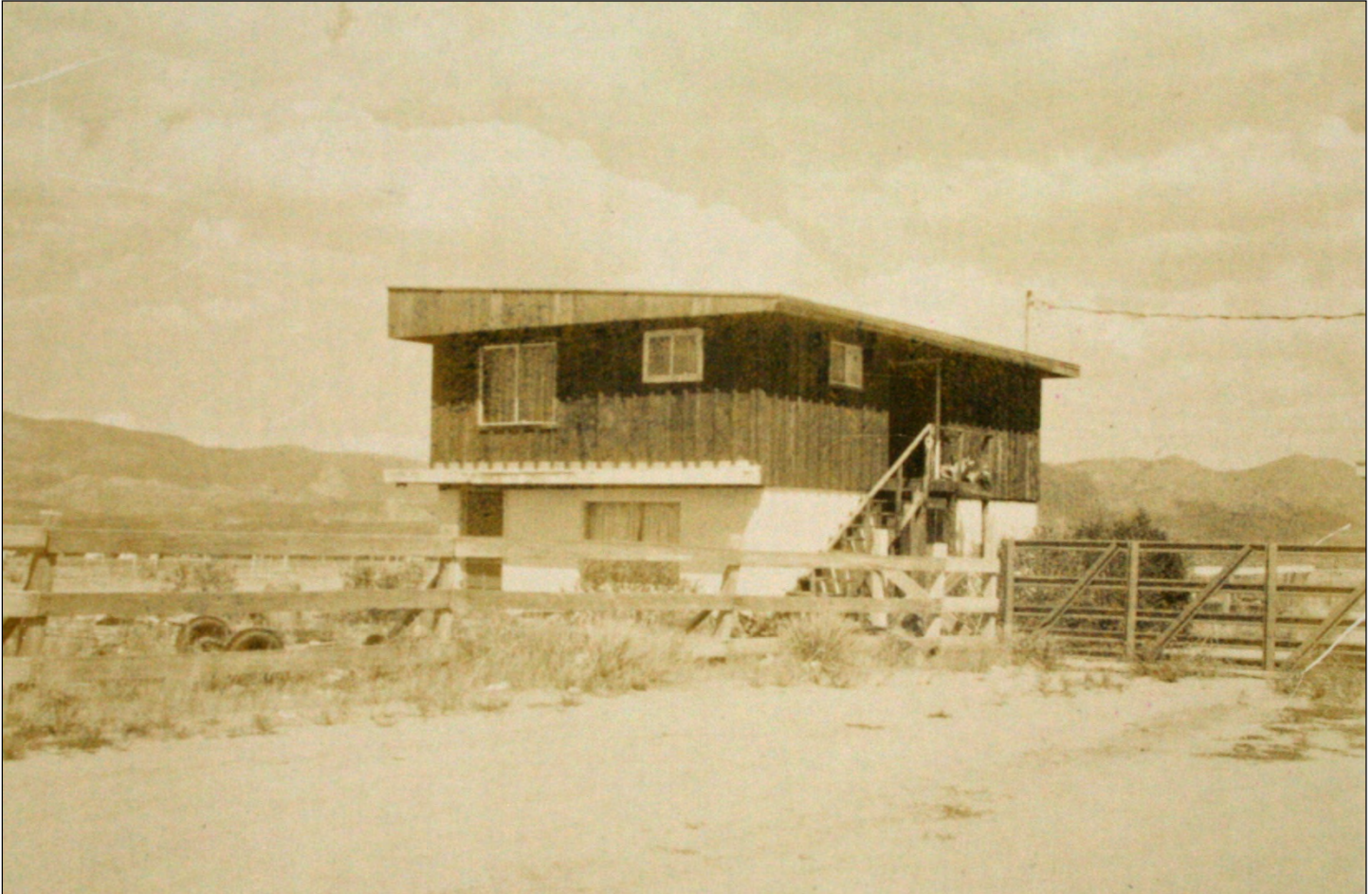


Figure 4. This ca. mid-1970s-1980s Assessor image (view northeast) shows the west and south walls of the Projection/Snack Bar/Restroom Building after the ca. 1970-71 modifications to the second story. The post and board fence (left), metal ranch gates, and the roof of the ticket booth (extreme right) also appear. Courtesy of Chaffee County Assessor, Salida, Colorado.

COMANCHE



SEPT 19-21

WHEN THE GAME
STANDS TALL

745







NO
PARKING

EXIT

ENTRANCE 500FT









**PLEASE
TURN
OFF
LITES**





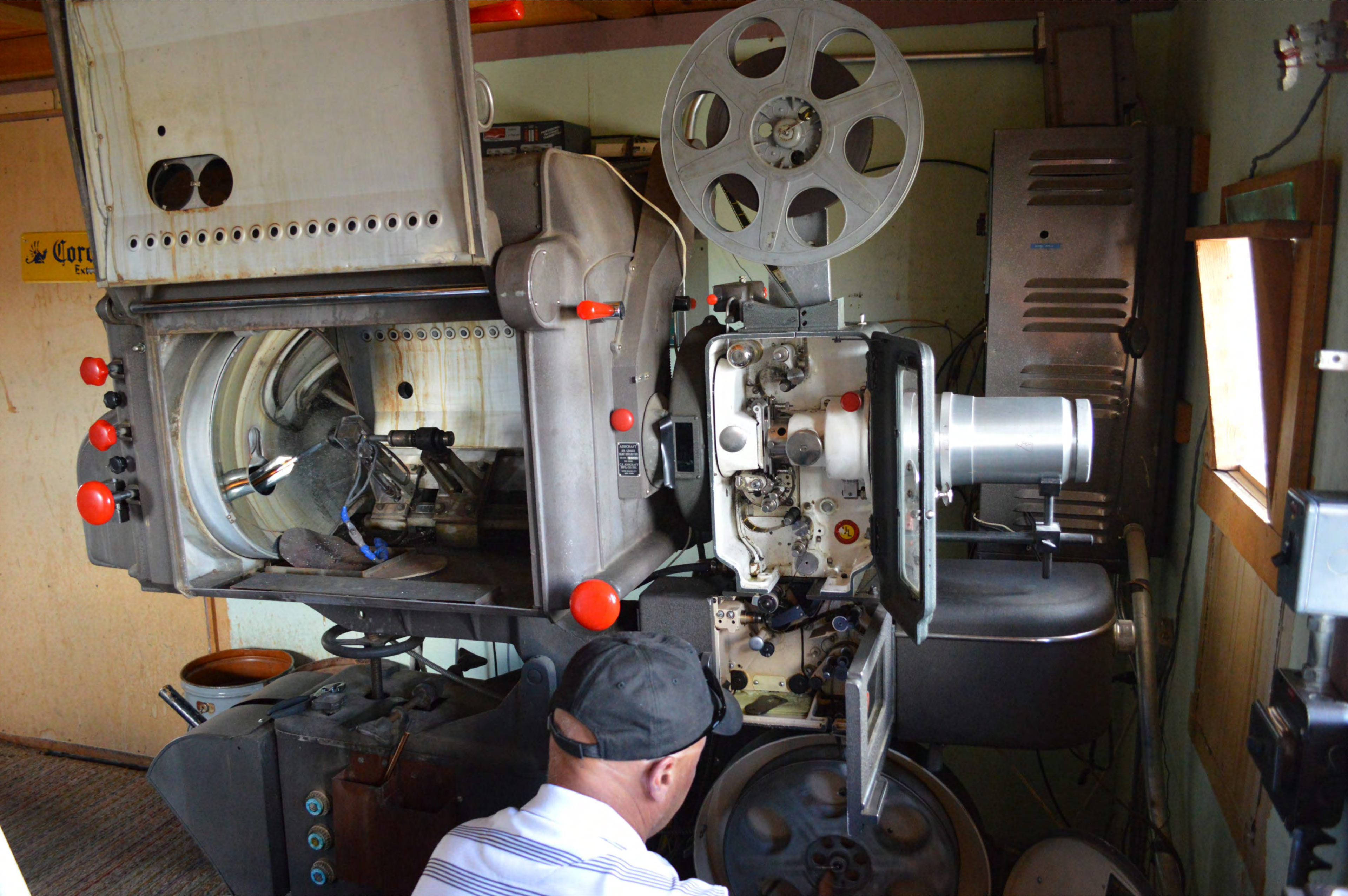


Jolly Time POP CORN

Fresh Hot

HOT!!! DO NOT TOUCH

Star



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Ext

AIRCRAFT
REPAIR
CORPORATION
11111
11111



Lucky 7

ARC CARBONS
LUCAR ARC CARBONS

TASHWASTE

PRE VIEWS

1

2

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ARC CARBONS
ARC CARBONS



WHEN THE GA
STANDS TALL
It's not how tall you are,
it's how you get back up.

ADMISSION
ADULT \$8.00
CHILD \$3.00









COMANCHE



SEPT 19 - 21

WHEN THE GAME

745

STANDS TALL





COMANCHE

OPEN

FRI - SUN

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Comanche Drive-In

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: COLORADO, Chaffee

DATE RECEIVED: 6/19/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/07/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 7/22/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/04/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000481

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 8.3.15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



HISTORY *Colorado*

June 11, 2015

Mr. J. Paul Loether
Deputy Keeper and Chief, NR and NHL Programs
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8th Floor (MS 2280)
Washington, D.C. 20005-5905

RECEIVED 2280

JUN 19 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

Dear Mr. Loether:

We are pleased to submit for your review the enclosed National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Comanche Drive-In (5CF.2874) in Chaffee County, Colorado.

The Colorado Historic Preservation Review Board reviewed the nomination at its meeting on May 15, 2015. The board voted unanimously to recommend to the State Historic Preservation Officer that the property met the criteria for listing in the National Register.

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Comanche Drive-In to the National Register of Historic Places.

We look forward to the formal listing of this property. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at 303-866-4683 or by email at erika.warzel@state.co.us.

Sincerely,

Erika Warzel
National and State Register Historian
(303) 866-4683
erika.warzel@state.co.us

Enclosures

CDs (2)
Signature Page

WWW.HISTORYCOLORADO.ORG

HISTORY COLORADO CENTER 1200 BROADWAY DENVER CO 80203