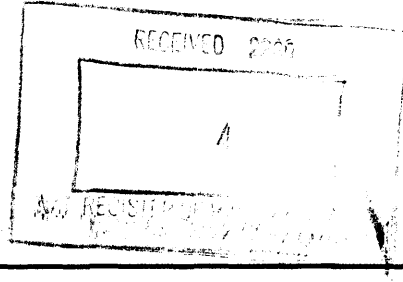


1252

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Luna Theater
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Mission Theater

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 2-6 Main Street
CITY OR TOWN: Clayton VICINITY: N/A
STATE: New Mexico CODE: NM COUNTY: Union Code: 059 ZIP CODE: 88415
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A

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 nationally
statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Katherine Slick
Signature of certifying official

27 November 2006
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___meets ___does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

1.17.07
Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: *Movie Theaters in New Mexico, 1905 to 1960*

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater (movie theater)

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater (movie theater)

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Mission Revival

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION: CONCRETE
WALLS: STUCCO
ROOF: ASPHALT
OTHER: BRICK

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-10).

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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 VALUE, 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.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION; ARCHITECTURE

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1916-1956

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1916; 1935

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: N/A

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-8 through 8-13).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-14).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- 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 #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Historic Preservation Division, Office of Cultural Affairs*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES Zone Easting Northing
 1 13 662625 4035522 (NAD83/WGS84)

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Lots 2-8 of Block 1050 of Clayton Original Town, Clayton, Union County, New Mexico.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the theater and the adjoining mercantile store.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: David Kammer, Ph.D.

ORGANIZATION: consulting historian

DATE: June, 2006

STREET & NUMBER: 521 Aliso Dr. NE

TELEPHONE: (505) 266-0586

CITY OR TOWN: Albuquerque

STATE: NM

ZIP CODE: 87108

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see attached *Clayton, NM*, USGS quadrangle map)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-15)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS N/A

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Roy Dean Leighton

STREET & NUMBER: 348 Springer Highway

TELEPHONE: (505) 374-9077

CITY OR TOWN: Clayton

STATE: NM

ZIP CODE: 88415

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Luna Theater
Clayton, Union County, New Mexico

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Description

The Luna Theater, named the Mission Theater from its construction in 1916 until 1935, is a two-story building with a concrete foundation, an excavated basement, and a barrel roof masked by a stepped parapet with a concrete coping. Sharing a common basement and façade, consisting of the same construction materials, and undertaken as part of a single project is the adjacent 6 Main Street, a former mercantile store now vacant. The building has brick walls faced with pebble-dash stucco facing. A marquee topped by a wall-mounted neon sign, both of which were added in 1935, is located over the recessed entry while a metal awning fronts the adjacent vacant mercantile store. Two small commercial spaces flank the vaulted recessed entry of the theater, and a tiled sidewalk within the recess leads to a ticket booth flanked by paired modern commercial doors. A concession stand is located along the rear wall of the lobby, and restrooms are located on either side of the lobby with a stairway along the east side of the lobby leading to the projection room. The auditorium seats 375 and faces a deep stage with a taupe curtain. An outside stairwell along the west wall leads to a former ballroom located in the basement beneath the theater. One of the oldest extant theaters in New Mexico, the theater underwent some alterations including its renaming when it changed ownership in 1935. Those alterations, especially the addition of the marquee and interior Art Deco fixtures and other decorative elements, occurred within the period of significance and offer an excellent example of how a theater operator in the 1930s responded to perceived changing norms in theater appearances and amenities. As a result, the theater offers a high degree of integrity as to setting, location, design, materials and workmanship dating to the 1910s with an overlay of a marquee and interior furnishings reflecting popular tastes of the 1930s.

The Luna Theater is located along Main Street, also the alignment for U.S. 56, in the heart of downtown Clayton (Photo 1). The town's five-block downtown commercial center is oriented perpendicularly to the rail yard of the former Colorado and Southern Railroad, now a line of the Burlington and Santa Fe Railroad, with the Luna Theater situated at the southeast corner of Main Street and Front Street, the road paralleling the town's rail yard. Typical of principal thoroughfares in many New Mexico ranching communities, Main Street is wide, lined on both sides with commercial buildings including the Eklund Hotel, listed in the National Register of Historic Places and located diagonally down the block from the theater. The marquee and wall-mounted neon sign of the theater distinguish it from other Clayton storefronts, rendering the theater a local landmark along Main Street.

Initially the site of a mercantile store, the theater was constructed in 1916 following a fire that destroyed the earlier building. Constructed as a single project sharing a common basement, the theater with its flanking commercial spaces and the adjacent, now vacant, store to the east are numbered 2 – 6 Main Street (Photo 1). The theater section is two stories and the adjacent property is one story. The two, however, are linked by a façade united with a similar pebble-dash stucco facing and coordinated parapets. Photographs of the building at the time of construction indicate brick walls with decorative concrete moldings decorating the upper façade and a concrete coping topping the parapet. Also evident but now removed is a keystone with a decorative medallion

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Luna Theater
Clayton, Union County, New Mexico

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located at the center of the entry arch. Photographs from the 1920s predating the time when the theater was remodeled, show the building with its current pebble-dash facing and the concrete coping with a dark trim (Figure 7-1). It is likely that windows with concrete sills lining the west side of the building were filled in during that period.

The commercial section of the property to the east has fixed commercial windows and a wood-frame commercial door topped by a continuous transom rising above a flat metal awning that also extends over the commercial space located east of the theater's recessed entry (Photo 1). A similar awning above the commercial space located west of the recessed entry has been removed. Both spaces have wood commercial doors flanked by fixed commercial windows and topped by multi-light arched transoms set in slight relief to the façade.

A similarly shaped but larger arched transom divided into six wood casement windows opening from the projection booth is located along the wall at the rear of the recessed entry to the theater (Photo 2). The entry is a step above the sidewalk with a pavement consisting of black and white tile. At the rear of the entry and accessible from the lobby is a rectangular ticket booth with a single fixed front window and flanking side windows. The marquee, added in 1935, is triangular and extends over the sidewalk to the curbing and is supported by steel wires anchored in the upper façade.

A wall-mounted sign rises from the vortex of the marquee where a neon lunar face also appears and extends as an inverted L, bearing the name "Luna," to where it is affixed to the parapet just below its apex. The seventy-year old marquee addition partially obscures the upper portion of recessed entry whose details make it unique among extant theaters in New Mexico. A vaulted ceiling with its ribs and horizontal course consisting of ornate gilded plaster of Paris moldings, the upper portion of the entry is outlined with light bulbs along its outer edge, suggestive of urban theaters dating to the early 1910s. The upper walls beneath the vault are topped with capital moldings that extend across the top of the ticket booth (Photo 2). Wood picture boxes previously lined the recessed entry's walls, but have been removed.

A concession stand at the back wall of the lobby was added during the period of significance. Original restrooms flank the lobby, and a stairway along the east side leads to the projection booth. Doorways flanking the concession stand offer entry to the auditorium.

Lacking a balcony, the auditorium seats 375 and slopes downward toward the stage. Pilasters are located periodically along the walls and three steel beams extend across the ceiling. The upper side walls are lined with burgundy damask, and vertical Art Deco-inspired fixtures mounted to the pilasters produce a rainbow lighting effect with the use of colored bulbs (Figure 7-2). A similar but larger fixture is located in the auditorium ceiling, and two additional Art Deco fixtures are located at the rear corners of the auditorium. The metal-framed cushioned auditorium seats bear Art Deco moldings along their steel backs.

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Luna Theater
Clayton, Union County, New Mexico

The proscenium consists of columns topped with decorative capitals and is inset with a gilded plaster-of-Paris floral molding. Reflective of its use both for live performances and films, the stage lined with footlights arches forward from the curtain and extends deeply behind the curtain with two spaces formerly used as dressing rooms flanking the rear portion of the stage. The taupe curtain, likely dating to the opening of the theater, is ornamented with bauble-like Art Nouveau details above the red trim at its foot (Figure 7-3). The motor-operated curtain wraps around a wood roller.

Beneath the theater and the adjacent store is a common basement accessible from a hand-drawn rope lift. The original boiler system is housed at the rear of the basement. The basement section located under the theater has a tongue-and-groove wood floor and formerly functioned as a ballroom and roller skating rink. Entrance to the ballroom was from a stairwell located along the west side of the building where a series of basement windows were set in window wells with steel pipe railing. Since the floor was severely damaged as a result of flooding during the 1990s, the space is currently used for storage.

The Mission Theater underwent alterations, most notably the addition of the marquee and the wall-mounted neon sign when it was acquired by Gibraltar Enterprises in 1935 and renamed the Luna Theater. These changes, however, occurred during the period of significance and offer a case study in changing perceptions regarding theater appearances between the 1910s and the 1930s. Despite these changes, the details of the recessed entry remain evident and the theater retains a high degree of integrity as to its setting, design, materials, and workmanship. The current owners have continued to maintain the historic character of the building so that it conveys the feeling an early 20th century theater.

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Luna Theater
Clayton, Union County, New Mexico

Figure 7-1: Undated Photograph of Mission Theater



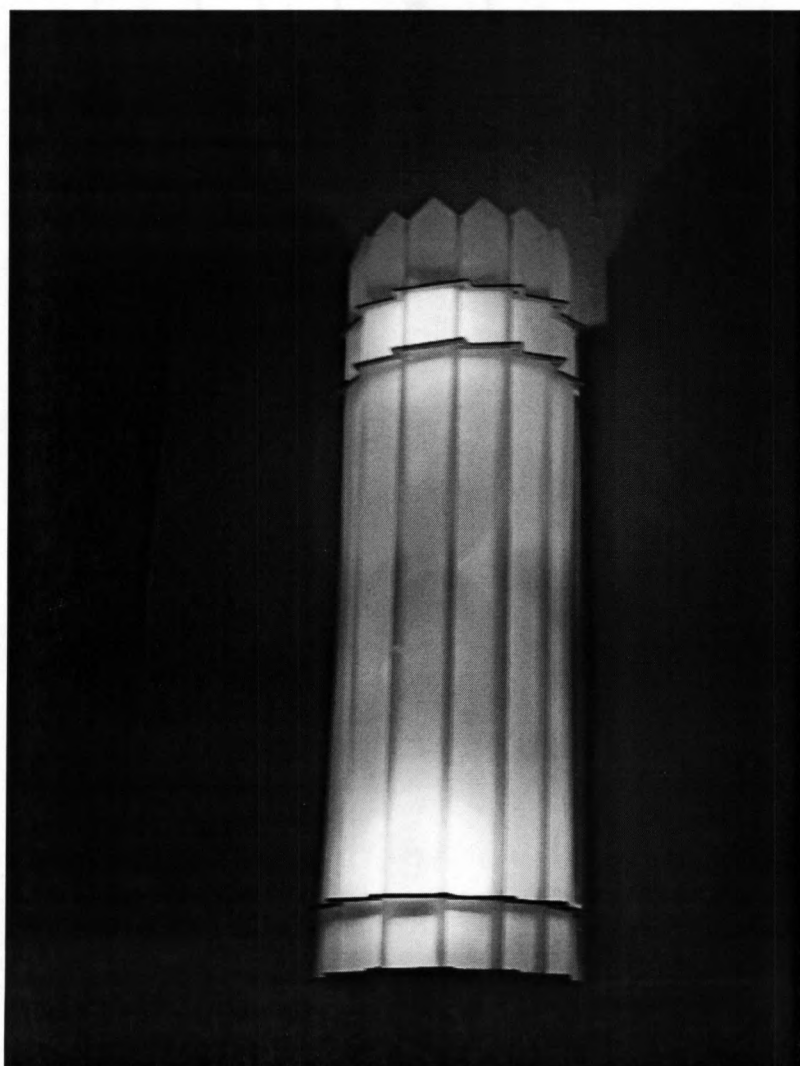
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Luna Theater
Clayton, Union County, New Mexico

Figure 7-2: Art Deco Wall Sconce (2006)



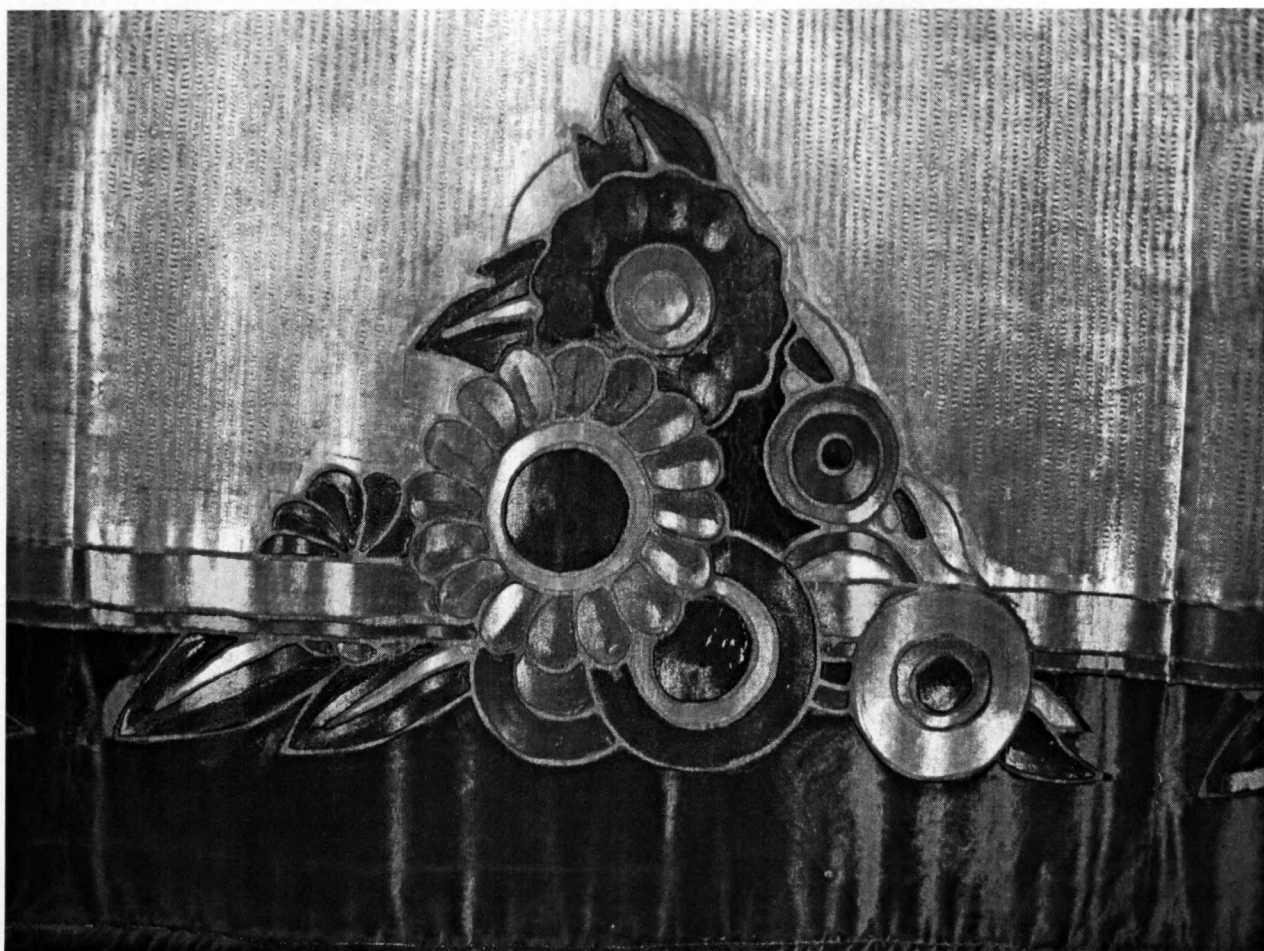
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Luna Theater
Clayton, Union County, New Mexico

Figure 7-3: Close Up of Stage Curtain (2006)



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Luna Theater
Clayton, Union County, New Mexico

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Statement of Significance

One of the oldest extant theaters in New Mexico, the Luna Theater has been a landmark on Clayton's Main Street since its construction as the Mission Theater in 1916. Built on the site of a mercantile store destroyed by fire, the theater and the adjoining store, now vacant, represented the Herzstein family's effort to recover from a disaster with an even grander commercial space. Although there had been short-lived theaters in Clayton previous to the opening of the Mission Theater, its completion gave the residents of largely rural Union County a modern motion picture theater. The inclusion of a ballroom in its basement further contributed to the building's significance as a gathering place in Clayton, the county seat, not only for movies but for a broad range of activities occurring on the stage of the theater and in the ballroom. The acquisition of the theater in 1935 by Gibraltar Enterprises marked an early effort by entrepreneurs in New Mexico and nearby states to develop an independent network of theaters and film distribution. Seeking to modernize the theater, Gibraltar's representative, T.F. Murphy, oversaw several changes including the addition of a marquee and wall-mounted neon sign as well as interior changes. The result is a theater that retains many of its original details and plans dating to the 1910s as well as some additions associated with theater norms of the 1930s. The theater is significant for its association with entertainment and recreation in Clayton and for its architecture and is eligible under Criteria A and C, meeting the eligibility requirements of the *Movie Theaters in New Mexico, 1905 to 1960* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

Context

Founded as a settlement on the newly completed Colorado and Southern Railroad in 1888, Clayton became the county seat of newly established Union County in 1893 and by 1910, two years before statehood, had a population of 970. By 1940 the town's population had grown to about 3,000, but the devastation of the drought and subsequent dust bowl had already begun to diminish the population of Union County from its high of 11,000 in 1930 to its less than 5,000 current residents.

The location of Clayton's first modern theater was determined by a devastating fire that destroyed a mercantile store owned by Morris Herzstein, rancher, merchant and financier, as well as his relatives and Hugo Lowenstein. Born in Germany, Herzstein had established himself in the Territory of New Mexico and prospered as the coming of railroads to eastern New Mexico encouraged large-scale sheep and cattle ranching and the growth of mercantile and shipping companies. Located in the block adjacent to Clayton's depot, the H. Herzstein and Company Store was a prominent fixture along Main Street where a commercial area developed along a thoroughfare perpendicular to the railroad. The loss of the store in 1915 prompted Morris Herzstein to redevelop the property to include both a store and a theater at a time when businessmen in other New Mexican communities also saw the economic potential that investing in motion picture theaters held.

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Luna Theater
Clayton, Union County, New Mexico

The result of Herzstein's vision was the Mission Theater, which opened in February 1916. Appearing much like a large commercial building with the adjacent mercantile store immediately to the east and a long brick wall extending along Central Avenue, the theater distinguished itself with a striking symmetrical façade that included an ornate recessed entry suggestive of theaters located in larger cities. Flanking the entry were two small commercial spaces capable of producing additional rental income, a plan common in many other theaters of the time. A metal awning extended across the store to the east of the theater as well as across both commercial spaces flanking the theater's entry. The gaping entry with its ornate vaulted ceiling, however, remained uncovered, offering a façade on Clayton's Main Street unlike any other in the community. So laudable was Herzstein's new theater, that New Mexico historian and booster Ralph Emerson Twitchell termed it "one of the most modern theaters in New Mexico" a house so "splendidly equipped" that it would "be a credit to a city of the size of Denver" (Twitchell 543).

The Mission Theater quickly became a center for entertainment and recreation in Clayton with the sons of Morris Herzstein working in the theater as ushers. According to newspaper reports, the theater offered numerous films, changing programs three or more times per week. Included among the films were those of notable boxing matches that were filmed and then marketed through theaters. At Christmas each year, the theater offered a free matinee for Clayton's children, including a visit from Santa Claus. The stage was also used for live performances including recitals by pioneer recording stars such as Jessie Porter Simpson, operettas, and local theatrical productions. The ballroom below the theater was the site for dances and local benefits, often featuring a local choral group, the Mission Serenaders.

As the Great Depression lengthened, it forced the closing of many theaters across the country. In 1935, the Mission Theater, having already been sold by the Herzstein family, was sold again to Gibraltar Enterprises. As discussed in the *Movie Theaters in New Mexico, 1905 to 1960*, Gibraltar Enterprises consisted of group of theater owners located in the Rocky Mountain states who incorporated in an effort to create a small movie chain of independent owners capable of gaining leverage in the distribution of films through a network of small theaters.

Upon acquiring the theater in November 1935, Gibraltar closed the theater for two weeks in order to complete a "thorough reconditioning" that included the installation of new seats and carpets, new lighting, a new sound projector, and the addition of a new marquee (*Union County Leader* 10/31/1935 1). When the theater reopened as the Luna Theater on November 14, 1935 showing Shirley Temple in "The Little Colonel," the crowd was so great, people were turned away. Under new ownership, the Luna Theater and the ballroom beneath continued to play an active role in the life of the community.

Reflective of the dust bowl that severely impacted Union County, a 1938 newsreel shown in the theater included a piece depicting "the grasshopper plague of the county" (*Union County Leader* 7/21/1938). Indicative of the humor that community members brought to the hard times of the era, the operators of the small snack shop in the commercial space west of the recessed entry to the theater named it "Dust Bowl Fountain Service."

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Luna Theater
Clayton, Union County, New Mexico

During Clayton's first blackout on September 12, 1941, the Luna presented a special "Blackout Friday Night," featuring the war film "Blackout," followed by "Along the Rio Grande" (*Union County Leader* 9/11/1941).

Although Union County continued to lose population in the second half of the 20th century, the citizens of Clayton have demonstrated resilience and pride regarding the community's history. Several properties within the community, including an historic district encompassing a New Deal-era public school complex, a WPA-constructed former town library, and the afore-mentioned Eklund Hotel are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and the town has recently initiated a Main Street program. The Leighton family, who has owned the theater since 1984, has sought to preserve its historic character and continues to make the property available for community activities. Listing the property is regarded as a further step toward ensuring its preservation.

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Luna Theater
Clayton, Union County, New Mexico

Bibliography

Clayton News. Various issues, 1916-1918.

Herzstein, Albert. Speech delivered at Herzstein Museum in Clayton, New Mexico, April 28, 1989. Albert Herzstein was the son of Morris Herzstein.

Twitchell, Ralph Emerson. *The Leading Facts of New Mexico*, 5 vols. Cedar City, Iowa: Torch Press, 1911-1917.

Union County Leader. Various issues, 1935-1944.

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Section Photo Page 15

Luna Theater
Clayton, Union County, New Mexico

Photograph Log

Information pertaining to all photographs unless otherwise noted:

Luna Theater

Clayton, Union County, New Mexico

Photographer: David Kammer

Date: October, 2005

Location of negatives: New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office

Photo 1 of 2

Theater and streetscape

Camera facing northeast

Photo 2 of 2

Entrance

Camera facing northeast