NPS Form 10-900 (Oct. 1990)		OMB No. 10024-0018
United States Department of the Interior National Park Service	RETTO	1.6
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form	نائدے <b>OCT</b> 2 کا	1405
This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for National Register of Historic Places Registration For (National Re by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, e entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10	egister Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking " to the property being documented enter "th/A" for 'not a enter only categories and subactegories from the Instruc-	x" in the appropriate box or applicable." For functions, stion. Place additional
1. Name of Property		
historic name: Landis Theatre/ Mori Brothers Building	5	
other names/site number:		
2. Location ,		······································
street and number: 830-834 Landis Avenue		N/A not for publication
city or town: Vineland		N/A vicinity
state: New Jersey county:	Cumberland County	zip code: 08360
3. State/Federal/Tribal Agency Certification		
	a. I recommend that this property be considered signific lation sheet for additional comments.) / 0//2/0/ Date	
In my opinion, the property meets does not mee comments.)	et the National Register criteria. (	sheet for additional
Signature of certifying official/Title	Date	
State or Federal agency and bureau	American Indian Tribe	
4. National Park Service Certification	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
I hereby certify that the 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:)	nature of the Keeper ASAN H, Beall	Date of Action

Ownership of Property Category of Property		Number of Re	esources within Property		
(Check as many boxes as apply)	-	nly one box)		reviously listed resources in the co	ount.)
X private public-local	X	building(s) district	Contributing	Noncontributing	buildings
public-State		site			sites
public-Federal		structure			structures
		object			objects
			1	0	Total
Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)		Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Registe			
N/A					N/A
6. Function or Use		······			
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)		Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)			
Commerce/Trade Recreation And Culture		Vacant/Not In Use			
Historic Subfunctions (Enter subcategories from instructions)		Current Subfunctions (Enter subcategories from instructions)			
Specialty Store Theater					
7. Description			·		
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)		Materials (Enter categories from instructions)			
Moderne		Foundation Walls	Concrete Brick		
				Concrete	
				Glass	
				Stucco	
				Terra Cotta	
			Roof	Other	
			Other		

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### 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.)

- X 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.
- X 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.

#### **Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

#### Property is

- A owned by 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture Engineering Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1937-1939

#### **Significant Dates**

1937 1939

#### Significant Person

(Complete if criterion B is marked above)

N/A

#### **Cultural Affiliation**

#### Architect/Builder

Lee, William H. (1884-1971)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS:)	Primary location of additional data:
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.	State Historic Preservation Office
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	
See continuation sheet for additional HABS/HAER documentation.	

# 10. Geographical Data

# Acreage of Property: 1.00

# **UTM References**

(Plac	e additional U	ITM references on a c	ontinuation sheet.)				
1	18	498500	4370500	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2			· · ·	4			
			See continuation sheet				

#### **Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### **Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

Landis Theatre/ Mori Brothers Building Name of Property

11. Form Prepared By

# name/title: Penelope S. Watson, AIA, Principal date: 6/30/2000 organization: Watson & Henry Associates telephone: (856) 451-1779 street & number: 12 N. Pearl Street city or town: Bridgeton **New Jersey** zip code: 08302state: **Additional Documentation** Submit the following items with the completed form: **Continuation Sheets** Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. **Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property **Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items) **Property Owner** (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.) name: Landis Theatre Redevelopment Association, c/o Sylvia Kelk street & number: 560 Chestnut Terrace telephone: (856) 691-5291 city or town: Vineland state: New Jersey zip code: 08360-

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. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget. Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

US GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1993 O - 350-416 QL 3

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#### **LANDIS THEATRE: ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION**

The Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building is a Streamline Moderne theater combined with a two story commercial building which was built as one structure with two non-communicating sections. The cream-colored brick-veneered façade of the theater is dominated by a semicircular marquee projecting over the sidewalk, and a vertical sign which bisects the façade above the marquee and projects above the roof line. The front façade of the theater is one story high, with a two-story center section the width of the marquee. Both the onestory and two-story masses have radiused corners. The full-width two-story auditorium space is set back from the street and is not visible from the sidewalk. The four-bay by nine-bay Mori Brothers Building, also veneered with cream-colored brick, has projecting piers articulating the bays, which contain steel-framed windows on the second floor and a variety of doors, garage doors, and windows on the first floor. Both buildings have low-sloped roofs behind parapets capped with concrete copings. (Photos 2, 3, 4, & 5)

The building structure consists of a combination of steel frame and load bearing masonry. The structure of the two-story areas of the complex, including the auditorium and Mori Brothers Building, consists of a steel frame, encased in concrete and brick masonry. When first constructed, the theater was billed as "fireproof throughout." The floors in the theater block are concrete slabs; the floors in the Mori Brothers Building are wood joists spanning between steel beams. The structure of the one-story areas of the theater block, primarily the area over the lounges, consists of wood roof rafters bearing on masonry walls.

The Landis Theatre was designed in Streamlined Moderne style. The lower part of the street (south) facade consisted of a deep blue glazed terra cotta watertable (Photo 10). Above the watertable, the facade was banded by cases for movie posters flanked by glass-block construction at the rounded corners. The illumination of the cases and building interior at night gave the appearance that the upper mass of the building was floating. The brick walls above were banded with horizontal metal strips which originally contained strips of neon lighting. The public facade of the building incorporated architectural materials, including stainless steel trim, deeply colored glazed terra cotta, glass block, and terrazzo, which were emblematic of the Streamline Moderne style. Stainless steel trim used on the main facade of the theater was incorporated into the ticket booth, entry doors, display cases, two-tier marquee and sign, and horizontal strips. (Photos 8, 9, & 11)

The theater block was designed with four public entrances, two on either side of the ticket booth. Each entrance consisted of a pair of double doors, stainless-steel framed with glass panels. The two pairs of doors flanking the ticket booth had stylized stainless-steel bar pulls. (Photo 9)

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The west (side) facade of the theater block, also veneered with cream-colored brick, had bays articulated by projecting piers. The façade steps up toward the north to accommodate the rising ceiling of the auditorium. The façade was penetrated by one steel-framed window and four exits. Two pair of exit doors, near the south end of the building, were covered by a large hood.

The north facade (rear) of the theater block was constructed of red brick. A large shed projected from the north wall and contained a stage. (Photo 7)

The interior was designed in a machine aesthetic, combining deep colors with natural finishes. The theater was "modern throughout with a beautiful yet dignified color scheme along nautical lines, aquamarine blue blending tastefully with hard-wood furnishings and light-colored walls. Brilliant lighting affects add to the theatre's beauty."

Emphasis on the interior was on streamlined forms as opposed to decoration. This approach to design was particularly evident at the foyers and lounges. The walls of the outer foyer were lined with stainless steel display cases and deep-blue enameled metal panels (Photo 12). The floor in the outer foyer of the theater was surfaced with terrazzo designed a large circular pattern, continuing the circle of the marquee as seen in plan. The pattern on the floor was created by bands of alternating-color terrazzo.

The inner foyer was paneled with gumwood paneling. The plaster ceiling of the foyer was painted a deep aquamarine and the carpet was red and gray in a "modern whirligig design."<sup>2</sup> At either end of the inner foyer were two large panels of louvered frosted glass which served as both illumination and as return ducts for the mechanical system. Large veneer-paneled planters were located at the base of the louvered panels. Above the entrances to the auditorium a band of evenly spaced air-conditioning registers ran around the top of one wall; these registers resemble portholes and are protected by three continuous bars running the length of the wall (Photo 14).

Behind the glass block corners of the facade, and accessible from the inner foyer, were the men's and women's lounges (Photo 16). These rooms, which led to the respective restrooms, were finished in birds eye maple and etched-glass mirrors.

The 75' by 110' auditorium, accommodating 1200 people, was originally decorated in aquamarine and red. The walls were raspberry striped with wide bands of aquamarine and bronze. The lower portion of the auditorium walls were paneled in *Duali*, a veneer from Hawaii. The wall dividing the auditorium from the foyer consisted of a wainscot-height wall, with a "glass windbreak" up to the ceiling.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 "Landis Theatre Now Completed," Evening Times, 11 Mar. 1937.
- 2 "Public Officials to Formally Open Landis Theatre," Evening Times, 12 Mar. 1937.
- 3 "Public Officials to Formally Open Landis Theatre," Evening Times, 12 Mar. 1937.

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The auditorium ceiling was stepped in six levels, which served to "break the velocity of sound and to permit the elimination of echoes without padding the side or rear walls."<sup>4</sup> Each of the breaks in the ceiling was curved and finished in bronze. The ceiling immediately in front of the mezzanine level (projection room) was clad with a "special acoustic material" to absorb the sound.<sup>5</sup> The rest of the ceiling was painted a light peach color.

The lighting in the auditorium space, referred to as Rainbow illumination, consisted of lights shielded by colored glass lenses projected through textured glass panels. Rainbow lights lined the mezzanine on either side of the projection room.

Other interior light fixtures, used at several locations throughout the theater, are made of long bars of clear crystal through which light is diffused. Fixtures in which the bars are oriented in a horizontal position were located in the outer and inner foyers (Photo 18). A variation of the fixture, in which the bars are vertical, were located in the auditorium above the entrances (Photo 13).

#### **THE MORI BROTHERS BUILDING: ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION**

The Mori Brothers Building was designed as a two-story, four bay by nine bay structure. At the top of each brick pier, which separated the bays, was a concrete pier cap with a simple geometric design. On the ground floor, six of the bays contained upward-acting sectional doors. The bays of the second floor contained forty-light steel-framed windows. Each window contained two operable panels of four lights each. The areas of brick masonry between the floors and above the second floor level contained flush panels delineated by changes in the brick pattern. The four corners of each flush panel were punctuated by square concrete units. (Photos 2, 5, 6, & 7)

The main show room occupied the third through fifth bays on the east facade. At the west side of the showroom was a mezzanine, accessible by stairs at the south end, that served as office space. Originally, the showroom was finished in a color scheme of green and white. Indirect light fixtures of chromium and steel "shed a shadowless glow."6 The showroom was separated from the areas that served as stock rooms and the service area by partitions containing glass block sections. The four garage bays at the rear of the first floor contained unfinished garage bays.

The second floor of the Mori Brothers building was accessible by a single stair which ran up from the second bay along the east wall. South of the stair, the floor was divided into several small rooms and a restroom, apparently for office use. The second floor, north of the stairway, was largely unpartitioned with the exception of several small spaces along the north wall.

<sup>&</sup>quot; Public Officials to Formally Open Landis Theatre," Evening Times, 12 Mar. 1937. " Public Officials to Formally Open Landis Theatre," Evening Times, 12 Mar. 1937. 4

<sup>5</sup> 

<sup>&</sup>quot; Mori Bros. Occupy Modern Quarters," Evening Times, 1 Mar. 1937. 6

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## LANDIS THEATRE/MORI BROTHERS BUILDING ALTERATIONS

The Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building has undergone relatively little
alteration. A brief review of the sequence of construction changes follows:
• 1936-37: First Build: initial construction:

- 1940s: Second Build: shed addition to back of stage shed;
- 1950s: Third build: minor alterations to inner foyer;
- 1960s: Fourth Build: minor exterior alterations (enameled metal panels and changes to garage doors);
- Late 1970s: Fifth Build: auditorium partitioning.

#### 1936-37: First Build

The building complex looked very much as it does today. Changes, other than those due to deterioration, have been limited to minor changes of the Mori Brothers Building. Presumably when the complex was built, the front of the building was a gas station, though the earliest historic views which show this date from approximately 1940. The Mobil "flying horse" logo hung over a striped awning over the personnel entrance. Directly south of the building, the gasoline pumps were combined in an island. A Mobilgas sign was located closer to the intersection. This use, if not the actual pumps, was retained into the 1960s.

#### 1940s: Second Build

Soon after the building was constructed, the shed addition to expand the backstage area was constructed (Photo 7). The opening in the existing masonry wall is very rough. The addition, constructed of concrete masonry is poorly keyed to the original brick masonry wall with "tabs" of brick masonry along the height of the walls. Daylight is visible through the joint between the original construction and the addition. The tongue and groove flooring on the stage is continuous into the addition.

#### 1950s: Third Build

Minor alterations to the inner foyer have been dated to the 1950s, based on their appearance. The changes included: replacement of frosted glass panels flanking the drinking fountains with mirrors; installation of light fixtures above the drinking fountains; and installation of recessed lighting over concession area.

The panels flanking the drinking fountains were fitted with strips of light fixtures, which served to backlight the panels. The panels were presumably frosted glass, similar to that found in the lounges. The side panels now contain mirrors (Photo 15).

Perhaps to compensate for the loss of the light provided by the backlit panels, light fixtures were installed above the drinking fountains. These light fixtures are single-lamp pendant-type fixtures with a brushed aluminum finish.

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#### 1960s: Fourth Build

In the 1960s, some minor exterior alterations were made to both blocks of the building complex. Enameled metal panels were installed at the theater block watertable and around the southeast corner of the Mori Brothers Building first floor. The panels at the theater block watertable have since been removed.

The ground floor upward acting sectional doors of the Mori Brothers Building were also altered. In an early photograph, the doors are divided into 36 lights by wide mullions. The doors on the south side of the building were replaced. The four original garage doors at the north end of the east facade are extant. However, plywood has been installed over the exteriors, and one of the doors has been modified to contain a personnel door.

Also in the 1960s, one personnel door and the storefront construction at the Mori Brothers Showroom were changed from their original construction to aluminum storefront construction (Photo 5).

#### Late 1970s: Fifth Build

In the late 1970s, the auditorium was partitioned longitudinally to create two smaller auditoriums. As part of the partitioning of the auditorium, the arrangement of the seating was altered. The seats from the center portion of the auditorium were removed and the remaining seating was reset to provide more leg room. Approximately 400 seats were removed, reducing the seating capacity to 400 persons per cinema.

The wall between the inner foyer and auditorium was altered. The center portion of the wall was removed and a recessed "cove" was constructed to enlarge the concession area. This construction has since been removed. Double doors at the center aisles of the two cinemas were constructed.

#### LANDIS THEATRE/MORI BROTHERS BUILDING: CONDITION

Overall, the exterior of the Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building retains its architectural integrity. With the exception of the removal of the gas/service station at the front of the Mori Brothers Building and some minor alterations, the exterior of the complex appears as it did when first constructed.

When the operation of the building ceased in 1987, the interior integrity of the building was excellent. By 1993, damage to interior finishes due to roof leaks was underway. Today, the interior finishes of the building, while extant, have been seriously damaged by water entry into the building. This damage is most apparent under the low roofs at the south corners of the theater block.

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A brief overview of the condition of the building concludes that the exterior masonry is generally in good condition with the exception of localized areas of cracking. The upper part of the west masonry wall is exhibiting serious cracking at embedded structural steel. The primary steel structure is in good condition where visible and indeterminate condition where embedded in masonry.

The roofing system is past its useful life and is allowing a large quantity of water to penetrate the building envelope and damage the interior finishes. The condition of wood roof and floor framing varies depending on its proximity to water entry.

The marquee and exterior signage are in poor condition. Some sheet metal has been removed from the vertical sign and stored for reassembly.

Windows are not fully protecting the building interior. Doors are in fair condition with respect to operability and hardware.

Interior finishes are deteriorated in varying degrees depending on proximity to water entry. Building systems are not adequate or operable in their current state.

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The Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building qualifies for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and Criterion C. It is significant in the areas of Architecture, Engineering, and Entertainment/Recreation. The building possesses architectural significance for its well developed expression of the Streamline Moderne style, use of modern man made materials and machine processes in conjunction with natural materials such as wood veneers. It possesses engineering significance because the original design of the building included technological advances in its mechanical, electrical and audio systems. In the area of Entertainment/Recreation, the theater played a significant role in the conflict between independent theaters and the Hollywood studios. The period of its significance extends from its construction and opening as an independent theater in 1937 through 1939, when Mayor Gittone, on behalf of the citizens of Vineland, filed a class action suit against Warner Brothers Pictures Incorporated in the District Court of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania following more than two years of economic harassment of the theater's owner by Warner Brothers.

#### ARCHITECTURE

The Landis Theater is significant as an outstanding example of a Streamline Moderne type of Art Deco movie theater, atypically modern and highly stylized for the region at the time it was constructed. Contributing to the significance of the design is the use of materials, combining modern man-made materials and machine processes with natural materials such as exotic wood veneers.

In the 1920s and 1930s contemporary design was known as Art Moderne or Modernistic in the United States. The term "Art Deco" was not coined until 1968, as the title of a book on the decorative arts of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>1</sup> The style developed in Paris in the immediate post-World War I years and arrived in the United States in the 1920s. Designers used French motifs directly with little attempt to develop their own.

Art Deco, as applied to architecture and decorative arts in the United States, underwent pronounced modifications after the stock market crash of 1929. The application of strictly French Art Deco became overused and passe. Two types of peculiarly American Art Deco sprang up in its place: the "Zigzag Moderne" of the 1920s, and the "Streamline Moderne" of the 1930s.

Streamline Moderne was intended to symbolize forward movement, industrial progress, and hope for economic revival. This style was characterized by horizontal structures with rounded corners and curved projecting wings and parapets, to which glass bricks and portholes were often added to provide an increased sense of movement and aerodynamics. (Photos 3 & 4)

Streamline Moderne theater design emerged gradually in throughout the 1930s, and for much of the American population became their only first-hand exposure

1 Alistair Duncan, American Art Deco, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. New York, NY, 1986, p. 7

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to the modern style. Architects who had indulged in elaborate historical interiors and rich ornamentation in the past converted to the new idiom which, on the interior, focused on the screen itself."<sup>2</sup> Radio City Music Hall auditorium is the best known example of a Streamline Moderne theater; Colony Theater in Cleveland is another nationally important building. Streamline Moderne theaters have experienced a high rate of attrition, and outstanding examples which have been demolished include the Earl Carroll Theater, New York, NY; the Trans-Lux, Washington, DC; the Cape Cinema, Dennis, MA; and the Chanin Building auditorium, New York, NY.

Significant Streamline Moderne buildings around the county other than theaters include Arthur Cramer's 7-up Bottling Company Building, Portland, OR;, Robert Derrah's Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant, Los Angeles, CA; and William Myer's Lane-Wells Company Building, Los Angeles, CA. The building to which the Landis Theatre is most closely aligned stylistically is the Hecht Company warehouse in Washington, DC designed by Abbott, Merkt & Co., with its radiused walls of glass block and cream-colored brick.

At the time it was built, the Landis Theatre was unusual in its complete integration of the Streamline Moderne style, including form and massing, in contrast to the more typical theater of its time which tended to be conservative in form with applied details of the moderne style. It was not until the late 1940s and into the 1950s that the more integrated approach became typical of cinema design.<sup>3</sup>

Landis Theatre, if not the only commercial example of the Streamline Moderne style in Cumberland County at the time of its construction, was by far the most elaborate and developed. Today it is the only surviving commercial example of the style in the county.<sup>4</sup>

Architect William H. Lee (1884-1971) of Philadelphia was a designer specializing in both theaters and academic buildings. He studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania from 1906 to 1908. One of his first projects after establishing his architectural practice in Philadelphia in 1919 was a theater at 9<sup>th</sup> and Spring Streets in Philadelphia.

The next year he was commissioned for the renovation the Walnut Street Theater, at 9<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Street. He designed the interior of the Royal Theater, 1524 South Street in 1925, after the exterior was designed in 1920 by Frank E. Hahn, which perhaps explains the conflict between the Art Deco interior and the traditional facade.<sup>5</sup> Lee designed the Sedgwick Theater, 7133-41 Germantown

2 Duncan, American Art Deco, p. 203.

3 Telephone interview with Stuart Galbraith IV, Curator, The USC Warner Brothers Archives, School of Cinema-Television, University of Southern California, by Holly Bombeke, Watson & Henry Associates, 03 August 1998.

4 A small Streamline Moderne residence is extant on Spring Road in Vineland.

5 Irvin R. Glazer, *Philadelphia Theaters*, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia and Dover Publications, Inc. New York, NY, 1994 p. 24-25.

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Avenue in 1928, using Art Deco elements in combination with traditional building massing and detailing. His 1936 design of the Landis Theatre represents a more integrated use of Art Deco by this "prolific theater architect".<sup>6</sup>

The basic building materials, cream-colored brick, glass block, and deep-blue terra cotta, are used in a design which is simple in detailing but powerful in effect through the skillful use of radiused curves. These appear in the corners of the first and second floor masses, and most dramatically in the projecting marquee. The semi-circular curve of the marquee is echoed in the ticket booth at its center point, and the curved bands of lighting under the marquee. On the interior, the curve of the marquee is continued in the twocolored terrazzo flooring in the outer foyer, which completes the circle. In the auditorium, the ceiling step-backs continue the motif of the curve, though in the reverse direction. Even the registers for the HVAC appear as circular portholes (Photo 14).

The stainless steel trim on the exterior and interior, including the light bands on the curved walls, the trim on the marquee, the stylized pulls on the doors, and the accents on the HVAC "portholes" further emphasizes the circular design theme and the modernity of the materials. (Photos 8, 9, 10, 11, & 12)

The drama of the building is heightened by the vertical sign which bisects the theater façade and rises above the roof line (Photo 3). (Some of the sheet metal cladding has been removed and stored pending restoration.) A second sign is incorporated into the design of the front of the marquee. The signs are an integral part of the building's design, and serve as a focal point for the façade's design.

The use of lighting is also masterfully incorporated into the total design. Lighting serves to highlight the drama of the curves which characterize the architecture. This lighting includes the curved bands of incandescent lights under the marquee (Photo 4), the lighting of the poster cases, the backlighting of the glass-block curved corner walls (Photo 3), and particularly, the neon lighting. The neon lighting is used to accent the upper part of the curved walls, and is the chief element in the signage, thus further integrating the signage into the total design. (Photos 4, 5, & 8)

The quality of the design and materials is unusual for a small-town cinema, at the same time it makes the building an evocative expression of its time and style. It is also unusual because of its date of construction: almost no theaters were built in the United States between 1930 and 1937, and the pace of construction increased only slightly between 1937 and 1940.<sup>7</sup> When it was built, the Landis Theatre was a rare example in the country of a local theater with an

<sup>6</sup> Irvin R. Glazer, *Philadelphia Theaters*, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia and Dover Publications, Inc. New York, NY, 1994 p.9.

<sup>7</sup> Galbraith telephone interview.

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integrated expression of the Streamline Moderne.<sup>8</sup> Today it is a rare survival of the style in Cumberland County.

#### ENGINEERING

The Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building possesses engineering significance because of the state-of-the-art systems which were included in its original design. The mechanical system was innovative with its combined airconditioning and heating system. The theater lighting system is significant for innovations such as the Alzak-coated reflectors and Rainbow lights. The theater audio system was also significant for several state-of-the-art systems including the Mirrophonic Sound System, the di-phonic speaker system, and the San-O-Tone unit.

A well-advertised technological feature of the new Landis Theatre was the airconditioning system, which was integrated with the heating system through the use of a large fan and shared wooden ductwork. Cool air was obtained by forcing air over pipes containing cool ground water pumped up from a well in the basement, rather than through the use of a condensing unit and coolant. The system operated on the same principle as current geothermal technology. The theater was "assured of a constant supply of fresh air" in hot and cold weather by the innovative mechanical systems. Air conditioning supply vents were placed in bands along the ceiling levels and "appear as portholes in a ship." (Photo 14) A large return grille in the auditorium ceiling was finished in silver. These systems were apparently in use until the building ceased operation in 1987.

The interior lighting system of the Landis Theatre, most of which remains, was top-of-the-line technologically. All of the lights were equipped with reflectors which were new to the lighting industry. The reflectors were made of metal coated with a material called Alzak, reported to reflect light with an 83-86% efficiency. All of the lighting in the theater was controlled from a control panel in the projection room. From this control panel, the curtains on the stage could also be electrically operated.

The lighting in the auditorium space, referred to as *Rainbow* illumination, consists of lights shielded by colored glass lenses projected through textured glass panels. The glass lenses were manufactured by Kimball Glass, a local glass company. *Rainbow* lights line the mezzanine on either side of the projection room.

Another innovative light fixture, used at several locations throughout the theater, used long bars of clear crystal to diffuse multi-colored lights. A newspaper article noted that "although new to Vineland, this type of illumination is in use in prominent buildings throughout the country." It was noted that the same type of lights were in use in the Radio City Building Group in New York. (Photos 13 & 18)

8 Galbraith telephone interview.

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The Mirrophonic Sound System had taken Western Electric, in conjunction with Electrical Research Programs and Bell Telephone Laboratories, ten years to develop. The new sound system was touted as "the 'last word' in motion picture sound equipment." Because of the Mirrophonic Sound System, it was said that "the true potentialities of natural, living sound reproduction" was realized through this "definite fulfillment of the scientific ideal." Refinements that made this system superior to previous audio systems included new vacuum tubes, improved horns, "noiseless" recordings (reduced scratching and background noise), and "wide-range" sound.

The Landis Theatre also featured a *di-phonic* speaker system and *San-o-tone* unit. The *di-phonic* speaker system was designed to spread the sound evenly throughout the auditorium, thus reducing the occurrence of "poor" seats. The speaker system contained horn elements that resembled honeycombs. The sound was "distributed scientifically so that the true proportions of every tonal quality are projected impartially to every seat in the theatre." The *San-o-tone* system, to aid those hard of hearing, consisted of earphones connected to reserved seats. These systems were the forerunners of "surround-sound" and assisted-listening systems current today.

These systems were not developed for the Landis Theatre, but they represent state-of-the-art technology for the time. They were innovative enough to be featured selling points in the early advertisements for the theater.

#### **ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION**

The Landis Theatre had a complicated chain of ownership. Eugene Mori was required to form a non-profit organization in order to sell bonds with which to finance the theater's construction. The Cumberland Holding Company, a forprofit entity, owned and operated the theater and reimbursed Mori from the profits; Mori then paid back the bond-holders. Sylvan Einstein was the president of Cumberland Holding Company.

The Mori Brothers Building was intended as an income-producing real estate investment; it was leased to a business entity known as the Mori Brothers which operated a Mobil service station on the south side, an automobile dealership in the center bays, and an automobile repair shop on the north side. The second floor was leased as a workroom for garment manufacturing.<sup>9</sup>

The Landis Theatre came into being during a time when most movie theaters were contracted by specific Hollywood studios; this arrangement came with limitations. One limitation was that a contracted first run theater was prohibited from showing any pictures not distributed by that studio. Another limitation was that there was a "clearance period," of approximately one month, within which the first run pictures could not be shown again by a competing

9 By 1955, the Mori Brothers had moved their "Buick Oldsmobile Cadillac International Sales & Service" into a new facility on the property north of the original location, at the corner of East Avenue and Wood Street. The original Mori Brothers Building continued to be leased as a service station. The second floor was the home of the Vineland Beauty Academy in the 1970's.

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theater.

In 1935, Vineland had only two theaters: the Globe and the Grand, both of which were contracted by Warner Brothers Theaters.<sup>10</sup> The Globe and the Grand were reportedly "of antiquated construction, were uncomfortable, unsanitary, and were believed, with good reason, by many persons in the community to be unsafe."<sup>11</sup> Vineland was a prime market for the construction of a modern theater.

Eugene Mori,<sup>12</sup> who saw the opportunity and also took great exception to the limitations that the Hollywood studios placed on theaters, began to develop plans for an independent theater, the Landis. His plans were met with strong opposition from the primary competition, Warner Brothers and their distribution companies. Sylvan D. Einstein, the director of the Cumberland Holding Company, reported that "We (The Cumberland Holding Company) have been blocked by Warner Brothers in every way. They even questioned our right to build this theatre, telling us that we were encroaching on their territory."<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, Mori proceeded and the Landis Theatre began operation as an independent, non-studioowned theater.

When Warner Brothers became aware of the plans for the construction of the Landis, they began a major renovation of the Grand. The Grand reopened on March 11, 1937; the Landis opened on March 12, 1937. The two theaters were in fierce competition. Both were billed as being in a "modern style" and both were air-conditioned. However, the main difference between the two was that the Landis was independent. Despite his attempts to capitalize on this fact, using the slogan "Built, Owned and Operated by Vineland Residents," the independence of the theater eventually presented a major obstacle for Mori.

The Landis Theatre opened on Friday evening, March 12, 1937 at 7:30 p.m. with a grand inaugural program that preceded the initial showing. Only a month later, the problems that Warner Brothers would present to the Landis became readily apparent. Eugene Mori had plans to award a Ford V-8 automobile in a drawing on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1937 at the theater. Several nights before the drawing was to occur, Mori received warning from an attorney from Camden that he should cancel the drawing. When Mori refused to heed his warning, the attorney sent a complaint by telegram to the local police, who then went to the theater to notify Mori that criminal charges would be filed if he proceeded. Einstein reported that the lawyer represented Warner Brothers, the primary rival of the

10 "Grand Theatre to Open Doors Tomorrow Night," Evening Times, 10 Mar. 1937. 11 Findings of Fact, item 9, Lawsuit filed in District Court of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Plaintiffs: Gittone, Mayor, et al., Defendants: Warner Brothers Pictures, Inc., 6 Nov. 1939.

12 The Landis Theatre was the beginning of Eugene Mori's entrepreneurship in the area of entertainment/recreation. He eventually developed the Cherry Hill Inn, the leading hostelry in southern New Jersey in the mid-twentieth century, and acquired ownership of the Garden State Racetrack in Cherry Hill, Tanforan in California, and Hialeah in Florida.

13 "Landis Theatre Official Faces Arrest for Lottery," Evening Times, 16 Apr. 1937.

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Landis. Warner Brothers denied the accusation and referred to the incident as "a malicious attempt to prejudice the high standing of Warner Brothers in a community which it has served for many years."<sup>14</sup> Mori was never arrested for the drawing.

Warner Brothers made a concerted effort to prevent the Landis from obtaining popular movies to run. They routinely had one of their local contract theaters run all Warner Brothers first-run movies to remove them from the Vineland market. Starting in September 1936, the Globe was operated on a seven-day week "for the principal purpose of consuming and delaying product required by Landis."<sup>15</sup> After two and a half years of the crippling practice, Mori decided to file suit against Warner Brothers. The suit was actually filed by the mayor of Vineland, Mayor Gittone, as a class-action suit on behalf of the citizens of Vineland.

In the suit, Warner Brothers and their distributors were charged with restraining and monopolizing interstate trade and commerce in motion picture films. The distribution companies involved in the suit refused to issue a first run license to the Landis for any price.

The District Court judge found in favor of Mayor Gittone and the citizens of Vineland. Warner Brothers and their distribution companies were found guilty as charged and a preliminary injunction was decreed to restrain Warner Brothers from the following activities:

- Monopolizing the exhibition of motion pictures in Vineland, New Jersey;
- Restraining interstate trade and commerce in exhibition of motion pictures;
- Conspiring to protect or perpetuate any such monopoly or restraint;
- Acting under any provisions in the license agreements with the Grand and Globe Theatres;
- Entering into any licenses for the exhibition of motion pictures in Vineland;
- Discriminating with respect to the licensing of motion picture film between theaters in Vineland;
- Licensing first run product to the exclusion of the Landis;
- Licensing to the Grand and Globe more first run motion pictures than are reasonably necessary for the proper conduct of their business;
- Granting the Grand and Globe the exclusive choice of motion pictures before the same have been offered to the Landis;
- Giving the Grand and Globe the right to contract for motion picture films before negotiations are entered into for film contracts with the Landis;
- Licensing motion pictures to the Landis under terms more discriminatory than are imposed on the Grand and Globe;

<sup>14 &</sup>quot;Landis Theatre Official Faces Arrest for Lottery," Evening Times, 16 Apr. 1937.
15 Findings of Fact, item 16, Lawsuit filed in District Court of the Eastern District of
Pennsylvania. Plaintiffs: Gittone, Mayor, et al., Defendants: Warner Brothers Pictures, Inc.,
6 Nov. 1939.

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- Excluding the Landis from contracting for first run product;
- Dissipating motion picture product.

On February 9, 1940, Warner Brothers appealed the preliminary injunction. The decree of the District Court was reversed and "remanded, with directions to proceed to final hearing upon the merits."

The historical impact of the lawsuit is not known. However, lawsuits of this type entirely ended the practice of "block booking" by the late 1950s, and distribution agreements between the Landis Theatre and Warner Brothers exist for the years 1953 through 1956.<sup>16</sup>

The Globe, the most antiquated of Vineland's three theaters, was never renovated, and closed permanently by the early 1940s. The Grand, remodeled to compete with the Landis, and with access to more popular movies, continued to provide competition for the Landis into the middle of the century. However, in the 1940s and 1950s Vineland had sufficient population to effectively support two movie theaters. Vineland residents remembering that period recall that while the Grand showed better movies, people liked to attend the Landis because it was the nicer theater. A block-long line of people waiting to see a show at the Landis is remembered as a not uncommon sight.<sup>17</sup>

The Landis was the longest surviving downtown cinema in Cumberland County, outlasting its rival Grand in Vineland, the Laurel in Bridgeton, and the Levoy in Millville until it was finally closed in 1987. After the Landis closed, the only operating cinema in the county was a two-screen theater in a strip mall at the west end of Vineland's downtown district.

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<sup>16</sup> Galbraith telephone interview.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Mario A. Nani,, local resident, by Holly Bombeke, Watson & Henry Associates, 24 April 1995.

NPS Form 10-900-a OMB No. 1024-0018 (8 - 86)United States Department of the Interior National Park Service NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Section 9 Page 1 name of property Cumberland County NJ county and State "A Good Record," Evening Times, 12 Mar. 1937. Appeal filed by Warner Brothers Pictures, Inc. in the Circuit Court of Appeals, Third Circuit, 9 Feb. 1940. Duncan, Alastair, American Art Deco, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. New York, NY: 1986. Findings of Fact, item 9, Lawsuit filed in District Court of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Plaintiffs: Gittone, Mayor, et al., Defendants: Warner Brothers Pictures, Inc., 6 Nov. 1939. Galbraith, Stuart, IV, Curator, The USC Warner Brothers Archives, School of Cinema-Television, University of Southern California. Telephone interview by Holly Bombeke, Watson & Henry Associates, 03 August 1998. "Glass Bars Used in Achieving a Soft, Glow Light," Evening Times, 13 Mar. 1937. Glazer, Irvin R., Philadelphia Theaters, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia and Dover Publications, Inc., New York, NY: 1994. "Grand Theatre to Open Doors Tomorrow Night," Evening Times, 10 Mar. 1937. "I'll Be There!," Evening Times, 12 Mar. 1937. Jester, Thomas C., Editor, Twentieth-Century Building Materials, The McGraw Hill Companies, Archetype Press, Inc., Washington, DC: 1995. "Landis Theatre Now Completed," Evening Times, 11 Mar. 1937. "Landis Theatre Official Faces Arrest for Lottery," Evening Times, 16 Apr. 1937. "Landis Theatre to Open Friday," Evening Times, 6 Mar. 1937. "Mirrophonic Sound System Takes `Tinny' Tones Out of Talkies," Evening Times, 12 Mar. 1937. "Mori Bros. Occupy Modern Quarters," Evening Times, 1 Mar. 1937. Nani, Mario A. Interview by Holly Bombeke, Watson & Henry Associates, 25 April 1995. "Public Officials to Formally Open Landis Theatre," Evening Times, 12 Mar. 1937.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Landis Theatre/ Mori Brothers Building Cumberland County, New Jersey

# **Verbal Boundary Description**

City of Vineland Tax Map Block 454 Lot 7.

## **Verbal Boundary Justification**

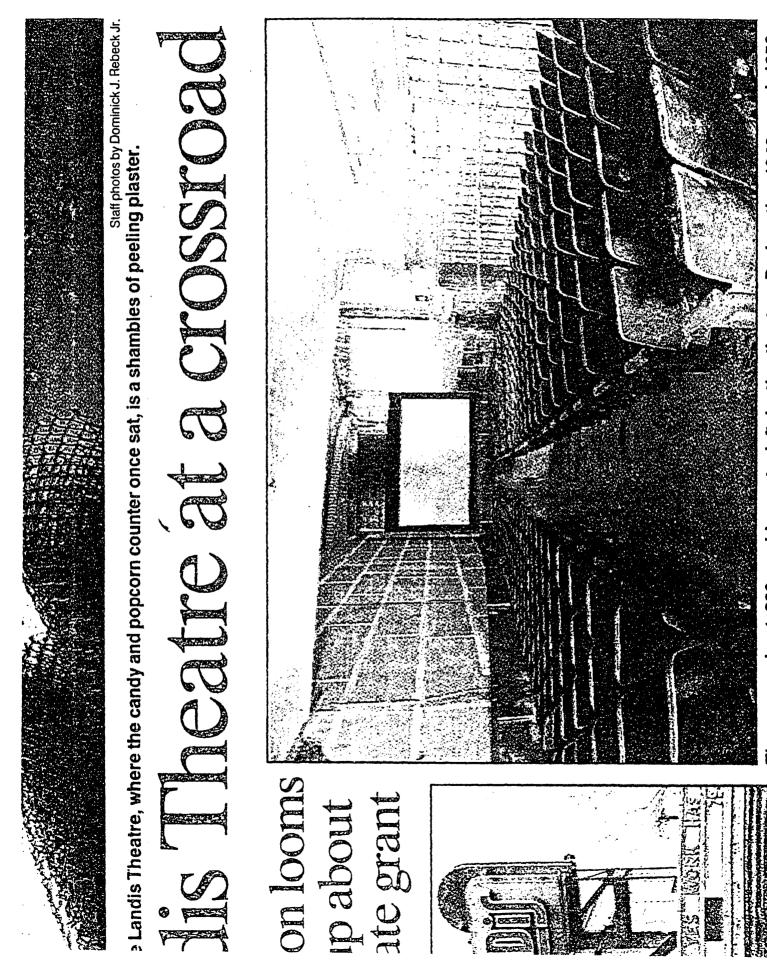
This is the historic lot dating from the building's construction in 1937.

OMB No. 1024-0018 NPS Form 10-900-a (8 - 86)United States Department of the Interior National Park Service NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Section Photographs Page 1 name of property Cumberland County NJ county and State Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building 1. Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Penelope S. Watson Date of photograph: June 2000 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building in context on Landis Avenue, Vineland, NJ looking west Photograph #1 Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building 2. Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Penelope S. Watson Date of photograph: June 2000 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building primary facades, looking northwest .Photograph #2 Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building 3. Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Penelope S. Watson Date of photograph: June 2000 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre primary facade and marquee, looking northeast Photograph #3 4. Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Penelope S. Watson Date of photograph: June 2000 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre marquee and entrance, looking north Photograph #4 Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building 5. Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Penelope S. Watson Date of photograph: June 2000 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building looking northwest Photograph #5

OMB No. 1024-0018 NPS Form 10-900-a (8 - 86)United States Department of the Interior National Park Service NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Section Photographs Page 2 name of property Cumberland County NJ county and State 6. Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Penelope S. Watson Date of photograph: June 2000 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Mori Brothers Building, looking west Photograph #6 7. Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Penelope S. Watson Date of photograph: June 2000 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building rear façade, looking southwest Photograph #7 8. Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Holly A. Bombeke Date of photograph: May 1997 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre sign from roof, looking southeast Photograph #8 9. Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Penelope S. Watson Date of photograph: June 2000 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre entrance and ticket booth, looking north Photograph #9 Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building 10. Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Penelope S. Watson Date of photograph: June 2000 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre exterior display cases and glazed terra cotta, looking north Photograph #10

OMB No. 1024-0018 NPS Form 10-900-a (8 - 86)United States Department of the Interior National Park Service NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Section Photographs Page 3 name of property Cumberland County NJ county and State 11. Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Penelope S. Watson Date of photograph: June 2000 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre ticket booth, looking northwest Photograph #11 Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building 12. Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Holly A. Bombeke Date of photograph: May 1997 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre interior, outer foyer, looking west Photograph #12 Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building 13. Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Holly A. Bombeke Date of photograph: May 1997 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre interior, auditorium, & Soft Glow light fixture constructed of glass rods in brass frame, manufactured by Kimball Glass Company, looking south Photograph #13 14. Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Holly A. Bombeke Date of photograph: May 1997 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre interior, inner foyer, porthole-like air conditioning vents with streamline moderne detailing, looking northeast Photograph #14

NPS Form 10-900-a OMB No. 1024-0018 (8 - 86)United States Department of the Interior National Park Service NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Section Photographs Page 4 name of property Cumberland County NJ county and State Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building 15. Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Holly A. Bombeke Date of photograph: May 1997 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre interior, raspberry-colored ceramic drinking fountain in inner foyer (sidepanels are thought to have been backlit frosted glass originally), looking south Photograph #15 16. Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Holly A. Bombeke Date of photograph: May 1997 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre interior, inner foyer, original sign for ladies room, looking southeast Photograph #16 17. Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Holly A. Bombeke Date of photograph: May 1997 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre interior, glass block wall in west lounge looking south Photograph #17 18. Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Holly A. Bombeke Date of photograph: May 1997 Location of negative: Watson & Henry Associates, 12 N. Pearl Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey Landis Theatre interior, inner foyer, original light fixture manufactured by Kimball Glass Company, based on a design they had originated for Radio City Music Hall, looking northwest Photograph #18 Landis Theatre/Mori Brothers Building 19. Cumberland County, New Jersey Photographer: Dominick J. Rebeck, Jr. Date of photograph: 06 July 2000 Location of negative: The Press of Atlantic City, 11 Devon's Lane, Pleasantville, New Jersey Landis Theatre interior, east side of subdivided auditorium, looking north Photograph #19

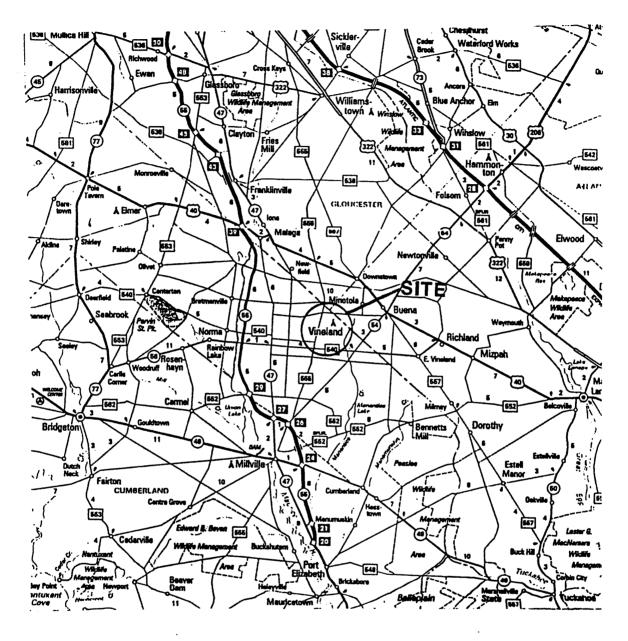


here are about 800 usable seats left in the theater. During the 1940s and 1950s, Vinelanders would fill the 1.200-seat theater to capacity.



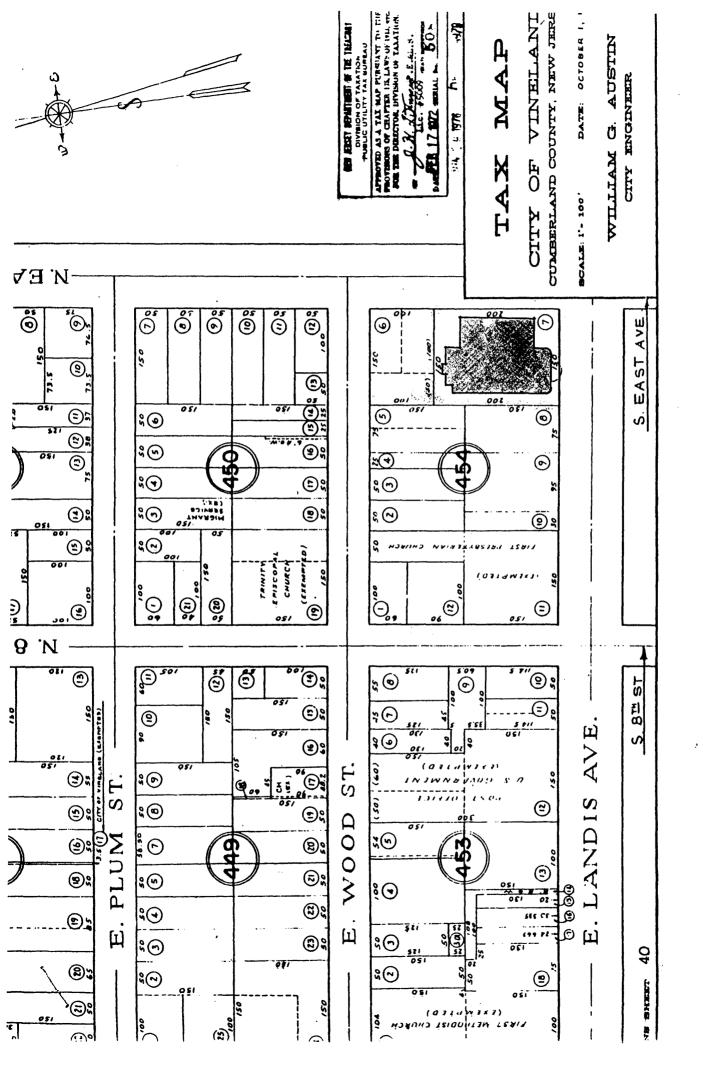
SITE LOCATION MAP USGS 7.5 Minute Series, Millville Quadrangle Scale: 1:24,000





**AREA LOCATION MAP** Scale: 1" = approx. 5.3 miles





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