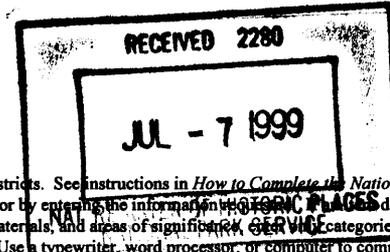


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

948



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information in the appropriate space. If a box does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, use the categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name LIBERTY THEATER

other names/site number ORPHEUM THEATER; ARCADE THEATER

### 2. Location

street & number 1008 & 1010 ADAMS AVENUE n/a not for publication

city or town LAGRANDE n/a vicinity

state Oregon code OR county UNION code 061 zip code 97850

### 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.)

*James Hammel*

Deputy SHPO

June 25, 1999

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

   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: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 3 Page 1

Liberty Theater, LaGrande, Union County, Oregon

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**LIBERTY THEATER (1910)**  
1008 & 1010 Adams Avenue

### COMMENTS OF THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE:

The Liberty Theater, built in 1910, is a three part block commercial style building 42' feet in height on the front elevation. It is located on Adams, the main street in LaGrande's downtown area. The primary elevation faces northwest, meeting the sidewalk, with the rear of the building meeting the alley. The foundation is concrete. The walls are unreinforced masonry of buff and ochre colored brick on the front and red brick on the side and rear, most likely made in a local brick yard.<sup>1</sup>

Theaters are significant to American history and describe the social history. Theater buildings were constructed early on as settlements became towns. The original downtown area of LaGrade was built parallel to the Oregon Trail route. When the railroad came in, the business relocated approximately 1.4 miles and paralleled the railroad tracks, making the unusual layout of angled interesection in LaGrande. The railroad not only changed the city's core and layout, it also ensured LaGrande's success as a town and meant an established theater could be built. In Eastern Oregon few of the early theaters remain. The Liberty Theater is LeGrande's only remaining example of a turn-of-the-century theater. It was originally built to accommodate traveling theater troupes, and later modified in the 1920s to show what were then new motion pictures.

The Liberty Theater was built by S.A. Gardinier to compliment his movie house, called the Scenic, located on a nearby street.<sup>2</sup> He and his wife, Madeline, bought the property in 1910. The theater opened in 1910 as the Orpheum, and the name was changed to the Arcade in 1915. It was renamed the Liberty in 1920, at which time a projection room was added, the outside stairwell removed, and the street level facade replaced. Ownership changed hands several times over the years. In 1928 the Greulich and Meyers company, bought the theater. In 1940, movies replaced plays as the theater's main form of entertainment. The Gruelich and Meyers partnership lasted until 1946 when Meyers sold his half to Ted Jones, president of a chain movie company. The Gruelich and Jones partnership resulted in the remodeling of the Star theater and its reopening as the Granada in 1952, replacing the Liberty as LaGrande's premier theater. In 1959, the Liberty closed its doors.

There have been some modifications to the lower level of the building. The original ticket booth and

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<sup>1</sup> Operated near LaGrande during 1840-1940.

<sup>2</sup> Lter the Gardiniers would also build the Star theater.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 3 Page 2

Liberty Theater, LaGrande, Union County, Oregon

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double entry doors have been replaced by large storefront windows and entrances into two retail outlets that now occupy the main floor. Large storefront openings, although non-historic in materials, are in keeping with the openness of most commercial buildings of this period. The fact that the entrance changed when the building was no longer used as a movie theater, has disguised somewhat its original function. However, the majority of the building retains its historic integrity, and the rear part of the building that contains the stage and fly gallery area of the theater, protruding up 24'6" from the main mass, describes its original use. The upper two thirds of the building retains its historic integrity and provides the historic association and feeling of the era in which it was constructed. The second level incorporates brick pilasters on either side of a grouping of three round arched windows containing multi-light casement windows topped with a rounded transom. Flanking these windows are rectangular window openings with casement windows topped by transoms with star-patterned muntins, bordered by pilasters. An overhanging cornice with modillion blocks tops the second level. Above that, a balcony level contains buff and ochre brick laid in a diamond pattern with one rectangular window opening in the center. Above that is another overhanging cornice of sheet metal. The building is topped with a parapet wall.

There is a basement that houses two small dressing rooms with small sinks, and the mechanical equipment. The main auditorium on the first floor was remodeled in 1962. In the balcony lobby the curved plaster walls, wood baseboards and door and window moldings, plush brown, red and blue carpet, and black and white tiles in the restrooms and manager's office, remain from the historic period and describe that era. Currently obscured, the 30' deep x 38' wide stage remains with a curving apron jutting out from the northeast center stage. The orchestra pit remains, as does the fly gallery. The upper and lower balcony seating remains although some holes have been cut through the floor for air conditioning. The ceiling of the theater is decorated with green plaster swirls, and a large chandelier hangs from the middle. The projection room is in tact. Plans include restoring the dressing rooms, office, balcony lobby, restrooms, seating, main auditorium floor and stage, and constructing a ticket booth, main lobby and concessions area, adapting the projection booth. The Friends of Mainstreet are planning to purchase the theater and they want to use this site for community plays and events, complimenting the performing arts outlets in the Union county area, including those at Eastern Oregon University and the recently restored Elgin Opera House.

As the only remaining theater from the historic period that retains its integrity, the Liberty Theater is significant historically and architecturally. The detailing of the patterned brickwork, the modillion blocks, round-arched windows, and geometric design emphasis, provide a unique architectural quality in LaGrande. The building displays the local craftsmanship and quality of work available during an important period of LaGrande's growth. This building contributes to Adams street and the historic qualities of downtown LaGrande.

Liberty Theater  
Name of Property

La Grande, Union County, Oregon  
City, County, and State

### 5. Classification

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		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**

N/A

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture / Theater  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce / Restaurant  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Commerce / Specialty Store  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Vacant / Not in Use  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>TH</sup> and Early 20<sup>TH</sup> Century American Movements: \_\_\_\_\_  
Commercial Style  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
\_\_\_\_\_  
walls Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Built-Up  
\_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_

### Narrative Description

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

X See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 7 Page 1

La Grande, Union County, Oregon

## Narrative Description

The Liberty Theater is a three part block Commercial style building with a rectangular plan and flat roof. Built in 1910 by theater enthusiast S. A. Gardinier (attributed) to compliment his movie house on a nearby street, the light colored brick building was originally a popular theater until its closing in 1959. Below the sheet metal upper cornice, an argyle pattern was created with ochre brick. Three rows of bricks around the triple windows and other brick patterns around the other windows give more detail. The pilasters have vertical panels with corbeled capitals on top. Original lantern pieces and the hook bolts, from which the permanent canopy hung, are still visible. The building is located on a 40' x 110' lot on Adams Avenue, the main street in La Grande, Oregon's downtown area. It shares its southeast wall with a neighboring building, housing an antique store, and its remaining side wall faces historic City Hall, with a small parking lot between the two buildings. The primary elevation faces northwest, meeting the 10' sidewalk, with the rear of the building meeting the alley. In 1962, the building's street level was partitioned into two retail spaces, 1008 and 1010 Adams Avenue. The remaining space was boarded up and has not been in use since its theater days.

The Liberty is diagonally oriented, paralleling the northwest-southeast tracks of the Union Pacific rail line. The Liberty's foundation is concrete. Its walls are unreinforced masonry of brick most likely made in a local brick yard which operated near La Grande from the 1840's into the 1940's. The facade is a buff colored brick with ochre accents, and the side and rear walls are of red brick.

The facade is 42' high. Its street level, which once boasted a permanent canopy, ticket booth and double entry doors has been replaced by large storefront windows and entrances into the two retail outlets that now fill the main floor--a Dominoes Pizza and the Frame-Up (a framing shop and gallery). Large storefront openings, although non-historic in materials, are in keeping with the openness of most commercial buildings of this period. The fact that the entrance changed when the building was no longer used as a movie theater has disguised somewhat its original function. However, the majority of the building retains its historic integrity, and the rear part of the building that contains the stage and fly gallery area of the theater, protruding up 24' 6" from the main mass, describes its original use. The upper two thirds of the building retains its historic integrity and provides the historic association and feeling of the era in which it was constructed. The second level incorporates brick pilasters on either side of a grouping of three round arched windows containing multi-light casement windows topped with a rounded transom. Flanking these windows are rectangular window openings with casement windows topped by transoms with star-patterned muntins, bordered by pilasters. An overhanging cornice with modillion blocks tops the second level. Above that, a balcony level contains buff and ochre brick laid in a diamond pattern with one rectangular window opening in the center. Above that is another overhanging cornice of sheet metal. The building is topped with a parapet wall.

The wall facing historic City Hall remains unchanged: a dark red brick wall interrupted only by the balcony fire escape and a ghost sign advertising cigarettes. The rear (alley) wall has been changed only to include entrances into the retail outlets. The southeast wall, shared by a neighboring retail outlet, also remains unchanged. A fly gallery, 24' 6" high, raises the height of the rear quarter of the building to 68' 8".

The full basement has concrete walls; a portion--housing two, small dressing rooms with 6' doorways and miniature sinks, and a room containing the wood furnace and stoker--has concrete floors. The remainder of the basement floor is packed dirt. Access to the basement is down a short flight of wood stairs just inside the alley entrance to Dominoes Pizza. The trap access is between the dressing rooms.

The remodeling work performed in 1962 completely erased what was formerly the main auditorium on the first floor of the building. Dominoes Pizza, 1010 Adams Avenue, occupies the southeast portion of the main

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 7 Page 2

La Grande, Union County, Oregon

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floor, a 24' x 110' space, while the Frame-Up occupies the remaining portion, a 16' x 110' space. The wood floor is covered with areas of carpet, vinyl and tile. The partition is of wood frame construction; the ceiling an acoustic tile suspension system. The trap door entrance to the stage is accessible by climbing a wood ladder on the storage room wall of Dominoes.

28' inside the Frame-Up, along the wall facing City Hall, entry through a wood door takes you up a flight of stairs into the past. It is here, at the top of the stairs, that you begin to feel the glory of the former theater. Here is the balcony lobby, a 40' x 22' space with curved plaster walls, wood baseboards and molding around the doors and windows, floors of plush brown, red and blue carpet in the lobby area and streaked black and white tile in the restrooms and manager's office.

Located at the corners of the lobby are the former women's and mens' restrooms, respectively. The 11' x 10' rooms each have a 4' x 5' window looking out on Adams Avenue. A small wall mounted sink and mirror remain in each restroom, along with the plumbing for two toilets in the women's room and one toilet in the men's room. Between the two restrooms is the 18' x 10' manager's office where three, 4' x 6' arched windows fill the room with light. From the windows you can look out onto Adams Avenue and beyond, to the rail yard.

After walking the length of the lobby, toward the southeast wall of the building, the lobby curves to the right. An opening, which once had double doors but now is covered by a sheet, leads to the balcony. This area of the theater can only be examined by flashlight and the "floor" created by installation of a ceiling for the businesses beneath, makes for unstable footing. A complete exploration is impossible. However, you can still sense what was. Now obscured by the remodel work, the 30' deep, 38' wide stage, with a curving apron, juts out from the rear wall, nearly filling the entire width of the building, and can be viewed from underneath. A large trap door was at center stage. Entrance to the orchestra pit was possible through a small door under the apron of the stage. Looming above the stage, the fly gallery remains unchanged: a dark space where tattered curtains and scenery await.

The lower balcony seating area is centered between an aisle on either side. The upper balcony seating is accessed by stairs on either side. Portions of the balcony floor have been sawed through to allow for large plastic tubes that provide the ground floor businesses with air conditioning. The ceiling of the theater is decorated with green plaster swirls. A formidable chandelier hangs from the ceiling.

If you climb the stairs on either side of the upper balcony seating area, you can access the projection room, a 10' x 17' space with a centered 3' x 3' window looking out to Adams Avenue. Metal doors lead into the projection room from either side. Two carbon projectors still sit in the room, the lenses aimed at the small openings through which a movie screen must have, long ago, been dropped from the fly gallery, for those new moving pictures.

The Friends of Mainstreet, a local group organized under La Grande Downtown Development Association, would like to purchase the Liberty Theater building and restore it to its former use. Plans include rehabilitating the dressing rooms, manager's office, balcony lobby, restrooms, and seating; uncovering the main auditorium floor and stage; constructing a ticket booth, main lobby and concessions area; and adapting the projection booth to work as both a control suite and projection booth. The Friends have a proven track record, having recently completed a downtown park--a project that required seven years, numerous grants and fund-raisers and hours of volunteer effort. They also have a substantial amount of money, left from the fund-raising efforts for the park, that they would like to use as seed money to jump-start the Liberty Theater project. The Friends see the restored Liberty Theater as a site for community plays and events, complimenting the performing arts outlets in the Union county area, including those available at Eastern Oregon University and the recently restored Elgin Opera House.

Liberty Theater  
Name of Property

La Grande, Union County, Oregon  
City, County, and State

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" on one or more lines 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.

#### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" on all 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

Architecture

#### Period of Significance

1910 - 1949

#### Significant Dates

1910

1920

1940

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

S. A. Gardinier (attributed)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

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

#### 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 8 Page 1

La Grande, Union County, Oregon

### Narrative Statement of Significance

Theater has always been many things to many people--a release from life's struggles and tensions, an escape to the world of adventure and romance, a much needed laugh or cry, a brief chance to be part of another life--and, as such, has always had an important place in our social history. In the scrappy settlements of the early Oregon Country, it seems most any place could be used as a stage--the back of an open wagon, a clean-swept grocery floor, a barn, the second story of a commercial building, a bar, a church, a school. Later, as the settlements became towns, structures were built specifically to serve as theaters. In Eastern Oregon, few of these early theaters are extant. The Liberty Theater is La Grande's only remaining example of a turn-of-the-century theater. Originally built to accommodate traveling theater troupes, and later modified to show the new motion pictures, the Liberty represents both the culmination of years' of effort to establish a home for theater along the so-called sagebrush circuit and the shift in societal preference from live to canned entertainment. The Liberty Theater embodies national register criteria A, in the area of social history at the level of local significance, and national register criteria C, in the area of architecture: its period of significance beginning with its opening in 1910 and ending with the end of the historic period in 1949.

On December 4, 1884, the land on which the Liberty was later built was purchased from C. H. Prescott, one of La Grande's founders, by C. B. Keiser for \$300. The property changed hands many times until S. A. Gardinier and his wife, Madeline, purchased the property on September 15, 1910. The Gardiniers were already owners of another theater, the Scenic, and, in addition to the Liberty, would later build the Star theater. The building now known as the Liberty was built by Gardinier, opening to the public in November, 1910, as the Orpheum. In 1920 a projection room was added, the outside stairwell removed, and the street level facade replaced. Interests and half-interests in the property changed hands many times over the years until May 1, 1928 when Francis Greulich bought A. R. Bowen's half interest in the Star and Liberty theaters to partner with J. Donald Meyers, forming the Greulich and Meyers company. Their partnership lasted until 1946 when Meyers sold his half interest to Ted Jones, president of a chain movie company. The Gruelich and Jones partnership resulted in purchase of the Star theater which was remodeled and opened as the Granada in February, 1952, replacing the Liberty as La Grande's premiere theater. Today, Francis Gruelich's heirs--Mark, John and Charles, doing business as La Grande Theaters, LLC--own the Liberty theater building, along with La Grande's two operating theaters, the Granada and the Drive-In.

The history of the Liberty's ownership is almost as rich as the history of theater in Oregon.

Theater in the Oregon Country has been recorded as far back as 1845 when a British sloop of war, the *H.B.M.S. Modeste*, anchored at Fort Vancouver, the far western trading headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company. To ease tensions between the American settlers and the Bay Company, its men staged a series of plays to which the Americans were invited, and even participated. As word spread through the Oregon Country (which at that time included the present states of Oregon, Idaho, Washington and parts of Wyoming and Montana), audiences came from up and down the Columbia River, from Oregon City, the Tualatin plains and from Portland. When the *Modeste* lifted anchor in May of 1847, she left behind a pattern of culture that continued to grow and flourish at the Fort and that traveled to remote settlements with the playgoers who had risked their lives to travel down the Willamette and across the Columbia to enjoy the performances.

Theater may have come as early as 1864 to La Grande. Evan McComas, an early La Grande resident, noted in his May 19, 1864 diary entry, "Rode about 60 m. today. Got back, attended a theater tonight." It has been speculated that the performance was held at John R. Wilkinson's converted grocery store, La Grande's first known theater.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 8 Page 2

La Grande, Union County, Oregon

Theater in La Grande remained of the home-spun variety for many years. Until the 1880's, established theater troupes mostly ignored the remote eastern Oregon towns. Travel was slow and dangerous, dependent on mule-drawn wagons trekking over the Blue mountains. This changed in 1884 when La Grande secured a position along the Union Pacific rail line thanks in great part to La Grande citizen Daniel Chaplin and his donation of a significant amount of land for the railroad yards. Chaplin and C. H. Prescott then platted the new town and the area between it and the old. The impact of the railroad was seen immediately. Businesses began relocating from "old town" along the Oregon Trail route to "new town" paralleling the tracks along the Grande Ronde valley floor, a move of approximately 1.4 miles. Chaplin's Addition, as it was known, became the commercial center of La Grande, and it paralleled the northwest-southeast tracks while the rest of the town remained on a traditional north-south, east-west layout. This combination of old and new town resulted in the angled intersections and five-street corners near the downtown area and the directional confusion of the diagonally oriented downtown buildings.

The railroad, in addition to bolstering La Grande's economy and ensuring the town's success, meant established theater could come to La Grande. And La Grande welcomed the theater, making room for it wherever possible. In addition to the grocery store cum theater and a small stage in the chapel of Blue Mountain University, there is evidence of other buildings used as theaters in the 1880's. A city ordinance of 1885 stated, "Theater and minstrel troops shall pay a license of \$10 per exhibition or a weekly license of \$40 at the option of the manager or troop. Every building used wholly or in part for the purpose of dramatic or operatic performances shall for the time being be regarded as a theater under this ordinance, provided that home troops shall be exempt from paying license under this ordinance."

In 1890, David H. Steward built Steward's Opera House, the only place for legitimate theater productions in La Grande until shortly before it closed in 1913. In 1902, Mr. and Mrs. S. A. Gardinier bought and remodeled a building on Depot street to open the Scenic Theater, primarily a movie house. The Scenic was followed by similar theaters, The Dime, The Electric, The Pastime, The Isis and The Lyric. These were all small theaters, used for the new motion pictures, and could not compete with Steward's Opera House's ability to stage vaudeville. However, even the Opera House, according to a 1906 review, was not capable of providing adequate space for the larger touring shows.

Then, in November, 1910, the Orpheum was built, opening to the rave reviews of the La Grande Evening Observer.

"Vaudeville will make its second debut in La Grande next Monday night when the finest vaudeville house in the Northwest, size of the town considered, will be thrown open...The seating capacity, the sanitary ventilation methods, whereby fresh air is circulated through the building every six minutes, the interior furnishings, the light effects, the newness and crispness, the size of the stage, all go to make the theatre a perfection in its line. The lower floor seats 439 people and the boxes hold 12. The gallery holds 182. These are all opera chairs and do not count chairs which may be installed later. This makes a total of 632 people which can be comfortably seated at one time. The aisles are provided with floor lights. This gives a splendid light effect and is a new arrangement. The wall chandeliers are attractively grouped and all go to insure the perfect lighting arrangements of the building. The aluminum curtain, the air system, and a half dozen other features make the building exceptionally new and up to date in every detail. A glimpse at the interior of the building will bear out the statement that it is nicely decorated and furnished. The walls are tinted and pretty.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 8 Page 3

La Grande, Union County, Oregon

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The building is equipped with water toilets and every convenience. Manager Gardinier has a private office on the gallery floor.”

Its opening week, the Orpheum’s bill offered acts by “The Gullenbertsons, an European Novelty Act; Hesse, Comedian & Juggler; Miss DeWeese, Violin & Banjo Expert; The McLins, Trapeze Performers. Evening prices were 15 and 25 cents, boxes were 50 cents. In 1949, the motion picture “Yellow Sky”, with Gregory Peck and Anne Baxter, made an extended run.

With the later addition of a fly gallery (year unknown), the Orpheum had the stage facilities to handle many road shows during the declining years of those attractions in La Grande. In 1915 the theater’s name was changed to the Arcade. In 1920 the theater was renamed the Liberty and received the structural changes previously described in order to better accommodate the growing trend toward motion pictures. In 1940, movies replaced plays as the theater’s main form of entertainment.

The Liberty reigned as La Grande’s best theater until February, 1952, when the Granada opened in the remodeled Star theater. With its 800 staggered seats, cry rooms for babies, new heating and ventilation systems, 20' veneer-plastic screen and advanced camera and lighting systems, the Granada was considered one of the largest and most modern theaters in eastern Oregon. With little fanfare, the Liberty closed its doors in 1959. In 1962, the first floor of the theater was remodeled to house retail.

Compared to the other former theaters in La Grande, the Liberty Theater was lucky. The little movie houses were converted to second story apartments. The State theater was remodeled to house a night club, the Tropicana, also known as La Grande’s worst architectural nightmare. The Granada is still a theater but retains none of its original integrity: its facade was completely replaced and its interior gutted to bring the theater to modern standards.

Today, the Liberty still boasts an integrity you can feel. The facade remains true to the changes made in the 20's. You can access the dressing rooms in the basement, the low doorways causing you to wince for the tall, leading men. The stage and its trap door is visible. Climbing the stairs to the balcony lobby is like climbing back in time. You almost expect the manager to step from his office to greet you or an usher to help you to your seat. The balcony seats have been removed but you can sense the stage and see the chandelier. The projection room doors, each bearing the sign “If You Don’t Work Here Keep Out”, open using a pulley system, making an odd noise that, in the dark, cold theater, causes you to nearly jump out of your skin. Inside, two, massive carbon projectors point toward the stage and screen. Even the skeletal bird remains on the floor can’t detract from the feeling of looking through the projection room into the theater, into the history of theater in La Grande.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section No. 9 Page 1

La Grande, Union County, Oregon

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Liberty Theater  
Name of Property

La Grande, Union County, Oregon  
City, County, and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 0.10 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

A 1/1 4/1/4/2/2/0 5/0/1/9/8/9/0      B / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting      Northing      Zone Easting      Northing  
C / / / / / / / / / /      D / / / / / / / / / /

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Liberty Theater is located in SW 1/4 SW 1/4 Section 5, Township 3 South, Range 38 East of the Willamette Meridian in Union County, Oregon. It is legally described as lot number 6 and the northwesterly 10 feet of lot number 7 in block 105, Chaplin's Addition to the town of La Grande. It is otherwise identified as tax lot 8200 at said location

**Property Tax No.**

8200

     See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated area encompasses the entire urban tax lot (40 x 110 feet) occupied by the Liberty Theater building from 1910 onward.

     See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Mae L. Lusk  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date November 15, 1998  
street & number 1104 2<sup>nd</sup> Street telephone 541-962-7142  
city or town La Grande state OR zip code 97850

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

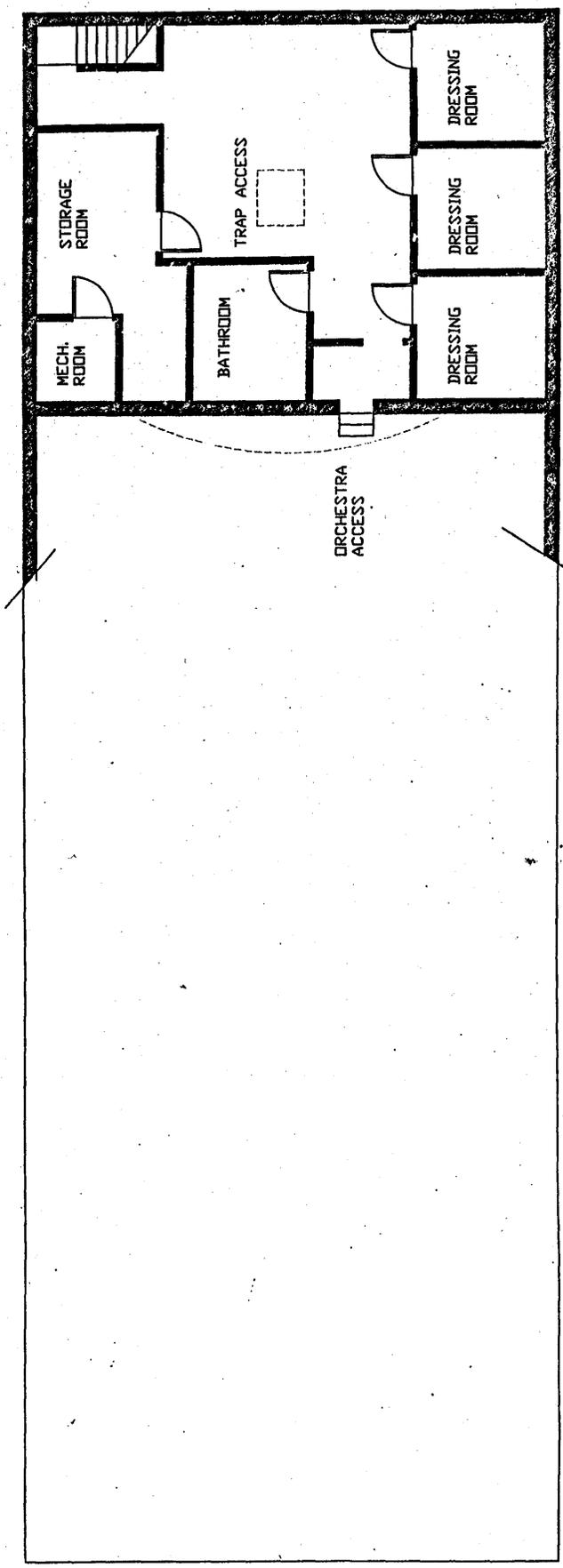
- Continuation Sheets
- Maps: A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A Sketch map for historic districts and/or properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
- Photographs: Representative black and white photographs of the property.
- Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Property Owner**

name La Grande Theaters, LLC; Carla Lucius, Manager  
street & number P. O. Box M telephone 541-963-3014  
city or town La Grande state Oregon zip code 97850

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.).

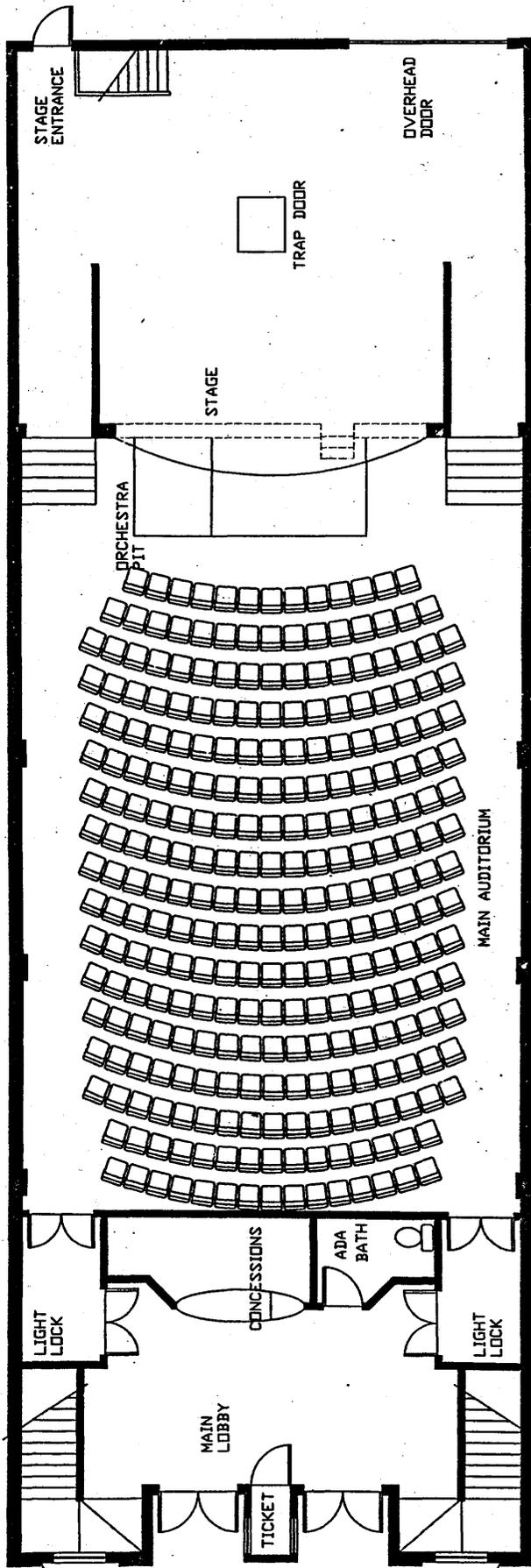
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form 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.



BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Planned Renovation - Liberty Theater

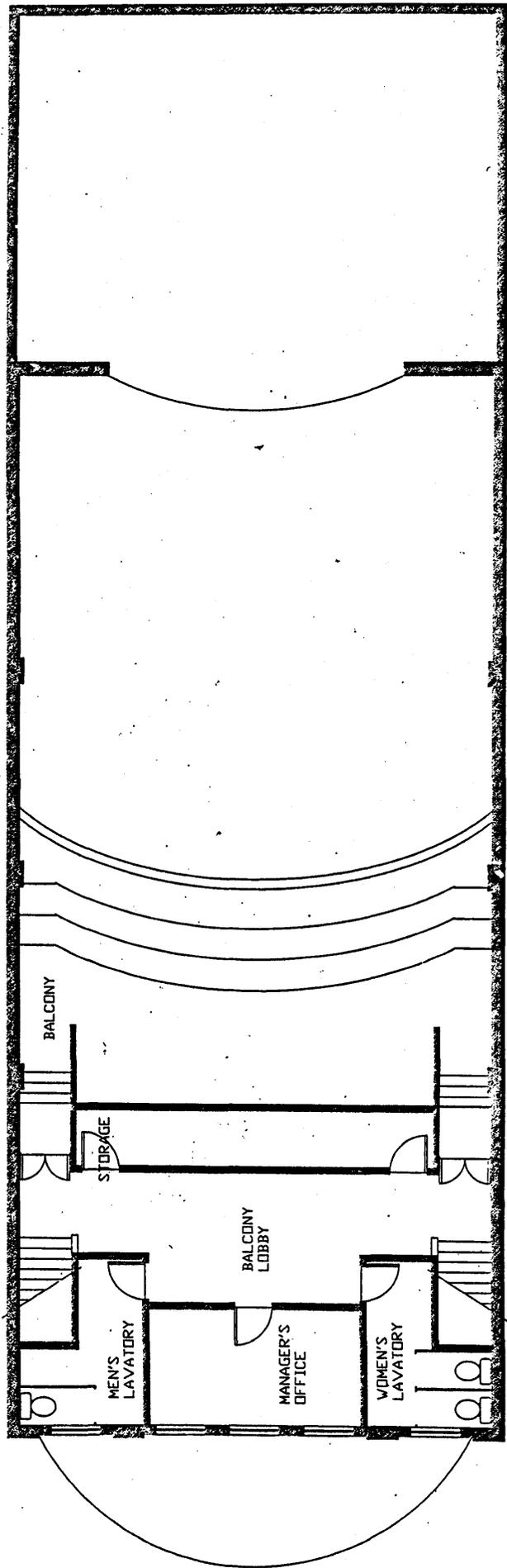


MAIN Floor Plan

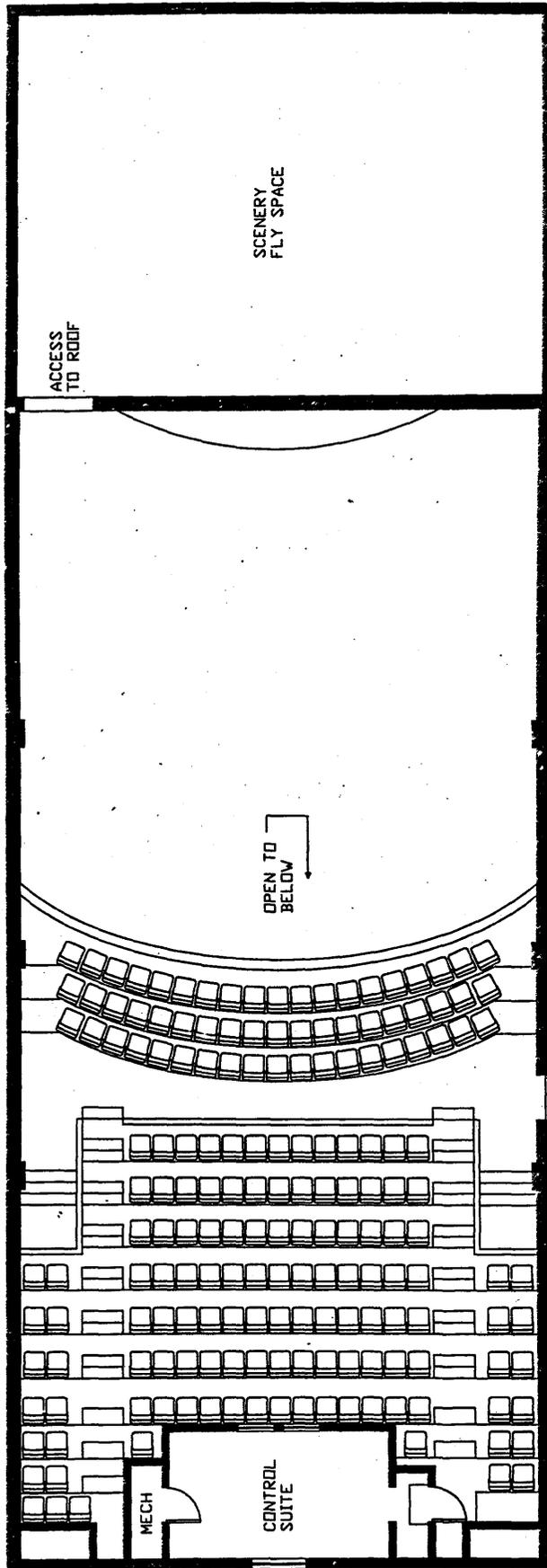
Planned Renovation - Liberty Theater

Planned Renovation - Liberty Theater

SAMPLE 1/0 - 1-10



2ND FLOOR PLAN



BALCONY FLOOR PLAN

Planned Renovation - Liberty Theater

RECEIVED  
 APR 17 1995  
 DEPT. OF REVENUE  
 STATE OF OREGON

SEE MAP 3 38 60D



THIS MAP WAS PREPARED FOR  
 ASSESSMENT PURPOSE ONLY.



SW 1/4 SW 1/4 SEC 5 T 3 S R 38 E WM.  
 UNION COUNTY  
 1" = 100'

SEE MAP 3 38 5CB

SEE MAP 3 38 5CD

- CANCELLED NOS.
- 1801 2201
- 2200U 2200J2
- 4300 4400A1
- 5300 5600
- 6200 6300
- 9601 9602
- 9800 10300
- 10400 10900
- 10400 11500
- 11900 12400A1
- 15303 15301
- 15303 15301
- U1 & U2 412300
- 6300 3100
- 6300 3200
- 6800 6901
- 6901 3300
- 11500

3S 38 5CC  
 LA GRANDE

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. PHOTOS Page 1

La Grande, Union County, Oregon

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A vast portion of the property is inaccessible or can only be viewed by flashlight (basement, stage, balcony). Photos included with this application are, therefore, only of the areas that are safe to access and are lit either with natural or artificial light..

**Common Label Information:**

1. Liberty Theater
2. La Grande, Union County, Oregon
3. Photographer: Mae L. Lusk
4. Date: November, 11, 1998
5. Negative on file: Mae L. Lusk, 1104 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, La Grande, Oregon, 97850

**Photo No. 1:**

6. Front elevation of building. Camera facing northwest.

**Photo No. 2:**

6. Front elevation of building. Camera facing northwest.

**Photo No. 3:**

6. Front elevation of building. Camera facing northwest.

**Photo No. 4:**

6. Front elevation of building. Camera facing northwest.

**Photo No. 5:**

6. Side elevation of building. Camera facing southeast.

**Photo No. 6:**

6. Side elevation of building. Camera facing southeast.

**Photo No. 7:**

6. Balcony- women's restroom. Camera facing northeast.

**Photo No. 8:**

6. Balcony- manager's office. Camera facing northeast.

**Photo No. 9:**

6. Balcony- lobby storage room. Camera facing northwest.

**Photo No. 10:**

6. Model of proposed rehabilitation. Camera facing rear.

**Photo No. 11:**

6. Front of Tropicara (former State Theater) and streetscape with Liberty Theater. Camera facing northwest.