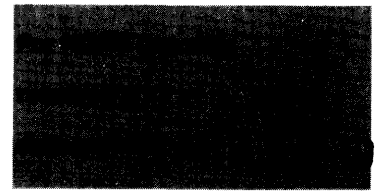


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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



82

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

1. Name

historic Burwell Building/ Tennessee Theater (Knoxville Banking and Trust Company Building)
and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 600 S. Gay Street N/A not for publication
city, town Knoxville N/A vicinity of congressional district Second Tennessee
state Tennessee code 047 county Knox code 093

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Dick Broadcasting Company, Inc. (Mr. James A. Dick)
street & number 6711 Kingston Pike
city, town Knoxville N/A vicinity of state Tennessee

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Knox County Register of Deeds, City-County Building
street & number Hill Avenue
city, town Knoxville state Tennessee

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

PDIL TAX ACT
title Knoxville/Knox County Hist. Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1974 federal state county local
depository for survey records Knoxville Heritage, Inc.
city, town Knoxville state Tennessee

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Tennessee Theater/Burwell Building is a building complex of three inter-related components under single ownership : the Tennessee Theater, a 1928 presentation "Moorish Movie Palace" style theater; the Burwell Building, a ten story plus mezzanine and basement Second Renaissance Revival office building; and two very small commercial structures sandwiched between a portion of the theater and office building. The complex is located in a heavily urbanized area of the central business district of Knoxville, Tennessee and is bounded on the west by Gay Street; on the north by Clinch Avenue; on the east by State Street; and on the south by Journal Place, an alley. Two buildings located at the southwest corner of the described block are under separate ownership and are not physically connected to the complex and are not included in the nomination. (See enclosed sketch map) The interior of the theater is remarkably original in character, with many appointments still intact, especially including the original theater pipe organ. The exterior of the complex is essentially unaltered except for windows in the office building portion. The interior of the office building has been altered substantially, although it is anticipated that some original fabric may be hidden and recoverable. The office building, once the tallest building in the area, still maintains a physical presence although no longer the tallest structure. The two smaller structures are sheathed in marble in a very simple twentieth century commercial style and are essentially unaltered on the exterior; the interiors of these two structures have lost all original fabric.

The front facade of the complex faces Gay Street, the main commercial street, with the entries to both the office building and theater occurring here. The office building, typical of Second Renaissance Revival commercial structures, is organized into three main divisions vertically on the facades. The ground floor, mezzanine, and second floor form a base, with stylized pilasters running from the ground to the mezzanine; a string course separates the mezzanine from the second floor, which serves as an entablature; a cornice divides the second floor from the third floor; the third through ninth floors form the middle portion; a terra cotta belt course separates the ninth from the tenth floor; the tenth floor caps out the building with a heavy cornice with massive dentils underlain with a second row of smaller dentils, and supported by massive bracketed consoles, occurring singly and paired.

The base portion is typified by rustication formed by alternating protruding and receding brick courses, and terra cotta mouldings forming cornices, capitals, surrounds, and decorative panels. The middle portion is of smooth brick , with a flat brick lintel with pronounced keystone formed by slightly projecting brick over rectangular windows.

Horizontally, the Gay Street facade is organized into seven bays defined by single window openings of one light metal sash, probably installed within the last twenty-five years. The northern three bays were built originally in 1907-08. The additional four bays were added in 1928 in conjunction with the construction of the theater. Except for a slightly wider brick panel at the division, the design of the 1928 portion exactly matches the original. The theater entrance is a single recessed opening at the ground floor under the four southern bays, and is one story high. A free standing box office structure, unaltered, occupies the center of the entrance area. A marquee, replaced in 1966, is above the entry. A large verticle sign, spelling "Tennessee" was removed in 1966. Some alterations have also occurred at the ground floor entry area of the office building, including a small canopy, ceramic brick, and aluminum doors and window frames. A semi-hemispherical metal hood remains over the entry.

The Clinch Street facade of the complex has three divisions : the office building, seven bays extending from Gay Street to the middle of the block, with verticle organization the same as the west facade; horizontally,

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Burwell Building/Tennessee Theater

Continuation sheet

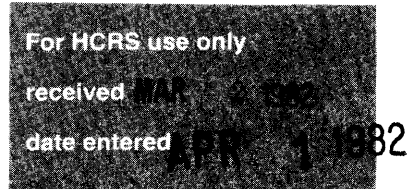
DESCRIPTION

Item number

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the first and seventh bays form slightly projecting pavillions and have single windows. The second through sixth bays have paired windows with single light sash. At the ground floor and mezzanine the oversize windows have intricate wood frames with an elliptical arch at top and a circular light and frame. At the tenth floor, the cornice extends only one bay; this cornice originally extended for the rest of the facade; there has been definite alteration of the brick at this level. Small windows occur in several bays at the basement level.

Immediately to the east of the office building two small structures form the second division of the Clinch Street facade. One is very narrow and of one story; the other of two stories and wider. Both of these structures are sheathed in marble, with projecting lintels and parapet cap. The ground floor windows of the two story building have upper lights with a small square multiple divisions. The upper floor has one over one wood sash. Fire escapes from the office building are supported on the roofs of these structures.

The third division of the Clinch facade is formed by the theater structure; a one story portion of the building was constructed to house an exit way, and street level shop spaces. Constructed of brick with terra cotta ornament surrounding openings, the facade is also distinguished by terra cotta medallions. Some wooden shutters and shingles have been added around several openings at the eastern end of this facade. The major bulk of the theater, visible behind the one story portion, is of smooth brick patterns in the courses. Exit doors from the theater also occur at this level.

The rear facade of the complex, facing State Street, has nine bays. From the north, the first bay is one story, forming the end of the shop space; the second bay is three stories; the third through eighth bays are approximately eight stories in height consisting of two floors of dressing rooms, the stage, and stage house. The dressing room windows have three over three wood sash; a major exit way at the ground floor has an arched opening; metal exit doors have been added in this opening. On the stage house walls, massive arches have been defined by brick coursing; each arch has a large circular medallion; a decorative frieze runs atop the central four arches. At the top of the building, horizontal course work banding has rectangular corner blocks above each arch.

The facade of the office building facing east (State Street) is of a common brick and has no ornamentation; only a portion of the building is visible above the theater.

The south facade of the complex, facing Journal Place, is visually obscured by buildings opposite the alley. The wall surface is smooth brick; the theater has exit doors, windows into the dressing room areas, and metal fire escapes. The office building has three bays with single windows in each bay; the windows are wood double sash-three over three. The top decorative cornice extends only a few feet along this side.

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Burwell Building/Tennessee Theater

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The interiors of the office buildings and commercial areas have been remodeled in various periods with little original fabric remaining; one room at the mezzanine level of the office building contains the remains of plaster work from the original bank lobby. The stairs in the office building also contain original rails and occasional marble work.

The interior of the theater is remarkably original in character. Designed in a theatrical Moorish style as a "Movie Palace", most of the decorative elements are intact. Finishes include plaster, which predominates; marble—primarily as base and some wainscoting; scagliola on some pilasters; and some terra cotta. Floors are either terrazzo or carpeted.

The entry has five pairs of doors, with a second matching set forming an airlock. The entry area of the outside foyer has terra cotta walls and plaster ceiling with cornice and moulding. The airlock portion has walls of a soft stone. The main lobby, with its massive 2 1/2 story height and approximately 100 feet long depth, is flanked on each side by ceiling high horseshoe arches and arabesque wall finishes. Some repainting has occurred in this area although the "atmosphere" is still original. Five large crystal chandeliers, each with a ceiling medallion, dominate the space. A double grand staircase extends to the balcony. A concession stand, with mirrored walls behind, some ceiling lights, and new shadow boxes were added in the 1966 remodeling in a portion of the lobby.

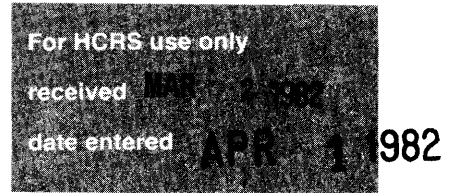
An upper foyer area is outside each of the house seating levels; in addition to the grand stair in the lobby, a stair at each end of the foyers interconnect them; in addition, at the north end, a stair proceeds to an exit at Clinch Avenue; on the south end a stair proceeds down to an office area for the theater. In addition, at the junction of the upper foyers and lobby, a stair flanking each side of the lobby goes down to a patron service area which includes lounges, restrooms, telephones, and other small spaces. Original plaster work and wood framing remain in this area except in the women's lounge, which was remodeled in 1966.

The two upper foyers appear to be unaltered except for carpet and a small exhibit panel screen in one portion. Decoration includes light fixtures, ceiling mouldings, and plaster decorative banding on the walls and ceilings. Some original furnishings, especially artwork, still remain. The house entry doors and back wall are original; curtains appear to have been replaced in 1966.

The house itself is oval in shape with a domed ceiling. The proscenium arch, banded by a broad ribbon with fleur de lis arabesque and alternating medallions, is flanked by organ chambers. Each chamber is defined by a major arch topped with a free standing cartouche situated in a recessed vault of the ceiling. This recess has a deeply textured pattern. Each chamber is also flanked by a bay of windows—simulated; the lower window has a tracery screen and large vase; the higher window is doubled and has stained glass. Decorative plaster banding outlines each element. Draperies in the actual organ chamber opening are not original.

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Burwell Building/Tennessee Theater

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On the rear side of the house, the organ chamber arches are duplicated with major entries to the balcony occurring through them. On each side of the house, three pairs of stair-stepped windows occur at the lower level; each window pair is topped by a simulated box seat above.

A cornice line encircles the house defining the oval shape; this cornice is approximately at the springline of the proscenium arch and forms a light recess; on top of the cornice is a continuous row of stylized animal shapes. The ceiling dome above this cornice is covered with a lightly textured arabesque with delicate paint pattern. An inner dome in the main dome contains an additional lighting recess; an elaborate plaster moulding rings this dome; and the center of the dome contains a complex shaped medallion, with a number of smaller medallions also occurring. Theatrical lighting positions also occur in this smaller dome. The rear of the main dome has several openings into the projection booth area.

The balcony covers approximately one-third of the orchestra level; the balcony rail is moulded to give the appearance of box seats. The ceiling underneath the balcony has numerous plaster mouldings. The main balcony exit on each side contains an arched frame with a large medallion with tracery glass.

The theater was re-seated in 1966 and currently has 1544 seats; original seating was about 1995. All draperies have also been replaced at some time. Some small areas of accoustical tile have also been placed on some wall surfaces. There has also been damage from roof leaks which in some instances has not been repaired or was expertly repaired.

The original Wurlitzer theater pipe organ is still in place; the organ has three manuals and fourteen ranks. The console is installed on an electric lift in the pit area of the stage. The remainder of the pit area floor is fixed.

The stage house contains original rigging and lighting controls. The dressing room areas occur under the stage and have not been maintained completely. A large mechanical room extends under the floor of the house.

The projection room area has several rooms once used for effects such as the brenograph.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention				

Specific dates 1907; 1928; c.1915 **Builder/Architect** George A. Fuller Construction Co.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Richards, McCarty, Bulford: Architects
Graven and Mayger, Architects

Criteria A,C

Located on what has been described for many years as the 100% corner of downtown Knoxville, the Burwell Building/Tennessee Theater has been a landmark structure since the construction of each portion of the complex. The complex is significant architecturally both for the design of the theater and the office building. The office building, built primarily in 1907, was the tallest building in downtown Knoxville at the time of its construction, and is both the only building built in Knoxville by the architectural firm of Richards, McCarty, and Bulford (of Columbus, Ohio) and also the only remaining building in this particular mode of Second Renaissance Revival in Knoxville. The theater, built in 1928, is the only movie palace ever built in Knoxville, and is one of only four remaining in the entire State of Tennessee. Designed by the firm of Graven and Mayger of Chicago (who were originally with the premier movie palace architects Rapp and Rapp), the theater is also unusual for movie palace architecture due to the oval shape of the auditorium, resulting in a very shallow house for its size. The theater is in remarkably original condition, with many even smaller details intact, and especially including a Wurlitzer theater pipe organ. As the premier theater in Knoxville and upper East Tennessee, the Tennessee has hosted many special events as well as a long series of movies; of particular note are the three world premiers that have occurred in the theater . This in conjunction with the many live stage performances have made the Tennessee vitally important to the theater scene in the area. Both the theater and office building were built by the George A. Fuller Construction Company of New York.

The Burwell Building was originally built as the Knoxville Banking and Trust Company Building in 1907-08. With ten stories plus mezzanine, the building was the tallest in Knoxville at the time of construction, although it held this distinction for only three years. Even though surpassed by additional construction, the building was still one of only five high rise structures in Knoxville for a period of approximately fifty years. This, in conjunction with the theater, a nearby hotel, and another high-rise early structure on the opposite corner, made this intersection Knoxville's 100% corner, considered by real estate agents to be the most important in the City.

In 1912 the Knoxville Banking and Trust Company ceased operation, and the Southern Railway Company established their main Knoxville ticket office in the former bank lobby. In 1917 the C.B. Atkin Realty Company purchased the building and established the name "Burwell", from Mrs. C.B. Atkin's family name. C.B. Atkin also purchased at this same time the additional property on which the Tennessee Theater auditorium would be built. The office building property was also the site of the founding of Blount College, forerunner of the University of Tennessee, as indicated on a plaque on the front of the building. The building has housed the offices of many prominent Knoxville businesses, with its prominent location making the address desirable. Since the office building also houses the entrance to the Tennessee Theater, it has also acquired significance from that association.

The Tennessee Theater was opened in 1928 to great fanfare and much publicity, including numerous articles and editorials. Ads described the building as " an acre of seats in a palace of splendor"; a Knoxville Journal editorial announced that they were "... amazed and astounded at the beauty and magnificance ..." of the theater and that the theater was

9. Major Bibliographical References

Knoxville News-Sentinel : 9/30/28; 10/1/28; 10/2/28; 11/16/66; 10/24/77
 Knoxville Journal : 9/30/28; 10/1/28
 Knoxville City Directories : 1906-1928

10. Geographical Data

~~NOT VERIFIED~~

Acreeage of nominated property 1

Quadrangle name Knoxville

~~NOT VERIFIED~~

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 17 236710 3983500
 Zone Easting Northing

B
 Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification The property consists of the block described as follows : S Side of Clinch, approx. 200 feet from Gay to State; W. Side of State approx. 125 feet to Journal Place; N Side of Journal Place approx. 100 feet towards Gay; parallel to Gay approx. 60 feet; parallel to Journal Pl. approx. 60 feet; E. Side Gay approx. 60 feet.

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

state Not Applicable code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ronald E. Childress, AIA

organization Childress and Associates: Architects

date December 8, 1981

street & number 524a S. Gay St; P.O.Box 2641

telephone 615 523 1917

city or town Knoxville

state Tennessee

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Herbert E. Hays

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

date 2/19/82

For NCRS use only

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

Delores Byrum
 Director of the National Register

date 4/1/82

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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Burwell Building/Tennessee Theater

Continuation sheet

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"... an important new asset ..." to the community. An article in the Knoxville News-Sentinel described the crowds invading the theater and the "... frescoes of queer little animals around the cornice". An editorial cartoon on the front page of the News-Sentinel, referring to a drawing of the theater's Burwell Building entrance, was captioned " Gee, wouldn't that lobby make a dandy parking place !", referring to the theater's oversize lobby.

Originally live stage shows were given with silent movies; legitimate theater performances were also given throughout its history. As the premier downtown movie house, the theater was open continuously from 1928 through 1977, except for ten days in 1966 for a refurbishing effort. Indicative of the theater's cultural importance to the community is the fact that three world premiers have been given there : "So This Is Love" in 1953 with Kathryn Grayson; "All the Way Home" in 1963 with Robert Preston and David Susskind; and "The Fool Killer" in 1965 with Tony Perkins. In live performances the theater has also presented to Knoxville audiences Fanny Brice, Helen Hayes, Tom Mix, Desi Arnez, and Glen Miller, to name just a few. Also indicative of the importance to the community are editorials supporting recent revitalization efforts of the building.

Architecturally, the theater is certainly unique in Knoxville and rare in the State and region. The theater was designed by the architectural firm of Graven and Mayger of Chicago; both of the principals of this firm having worked previously for the famous "Movie Palace" architectural firm of Rapp and Rapp. Designed in a "Moorish" architectural style, the theater's design is unusual when compared to many other movie palaces due to the extra width of the auditorium and shallow balcony, resulting from the wide oval plan for the auditorium. Also unusual is the grand oversize entry lobby with its ornate chandeliers. The George A. Fuller Construction Company, original contractor for the Burwell Building, also built the theater for Publix Theaters, a subsidiary of Paramount Pictures.

In 1977 the chain management of the theater closed, but agreed to leave the furnishings and equipment intact, in case a revitalization effort could be mounted. Since that time two separate classic movie presenters have operated the theater, playing almost always to sell-out crowds. In 1981, the present owner purchased the complex and has begun a rehabilitation effort for both the theater and office building. Planned for the theater is a combination of live and movie presentations.

The two smaller structures sandwiched between the office building and theater (see enclosed sketch map) have housed many different commercial and professional offices. Their primary importance for this nomination comes from their close integration within the complex, including structural and functional connections, such as exitways. These buildings are also under the same ownership, both currently and historically, as the theater and office building. Their style, while much simpler than the major components of the complex, is sympathetic to the Clinch Avenue facade; they are designed in a style that might be described as early-twentieth century commercial street front, and are sheathed in marble. Construction date is believed to be c.1915, with the facades maintaining their original integrity while the interiors are missing any original fabric.

In summary, the location of the complex on a corner with heavy pedestrian traffic, the "people" magnet of the theater, the visual stature of the building as once the tallest structure and one of only a few highrise historic structures have certainly made the complex an architectural landmark in the community. The design of the theater, as well as its survival essentially intact, has also made it important to the State and region. In addition, the many theatrical events presented has given the complex significance in theater.

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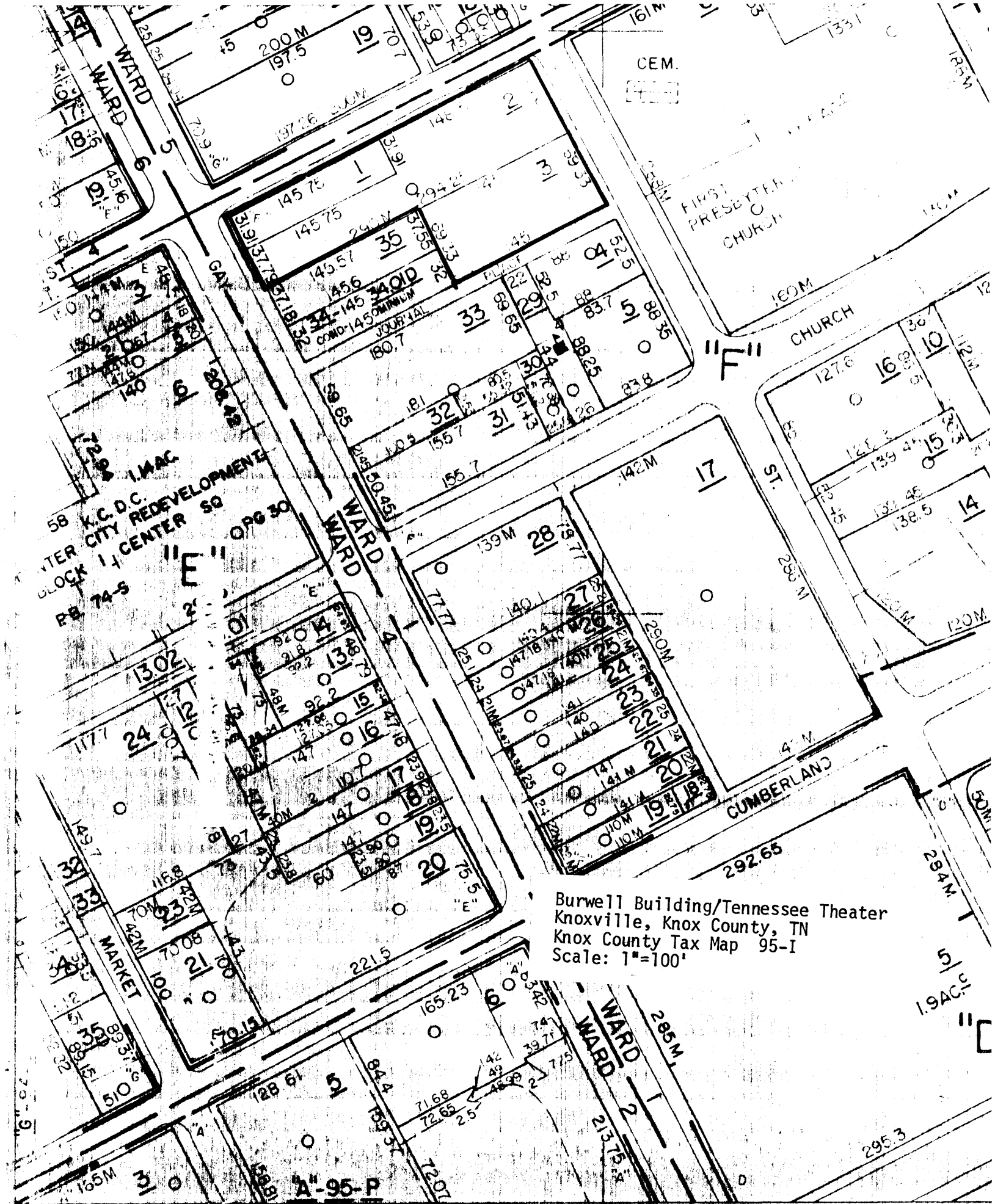
Continuation sheet

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BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The property nominated is under one ownership; only the building foot-print is included. The property has been under one ownership since 1917. The building foot-print runs along the public sidewalk right-of-way on all sides except the Southeast corner of the block, where two structures under separate ownership and function have been excluded. These structures have no historical connection to the property nominated. While the complex consists technically of several buildings, they are all closely inter-related structurally and functionally. The two small accessory buildings on Clinch are included due to ownership, scale, structural connection, inter-linkage of service systems (heating, electrical), and functional interconnection (primarily fire exits).

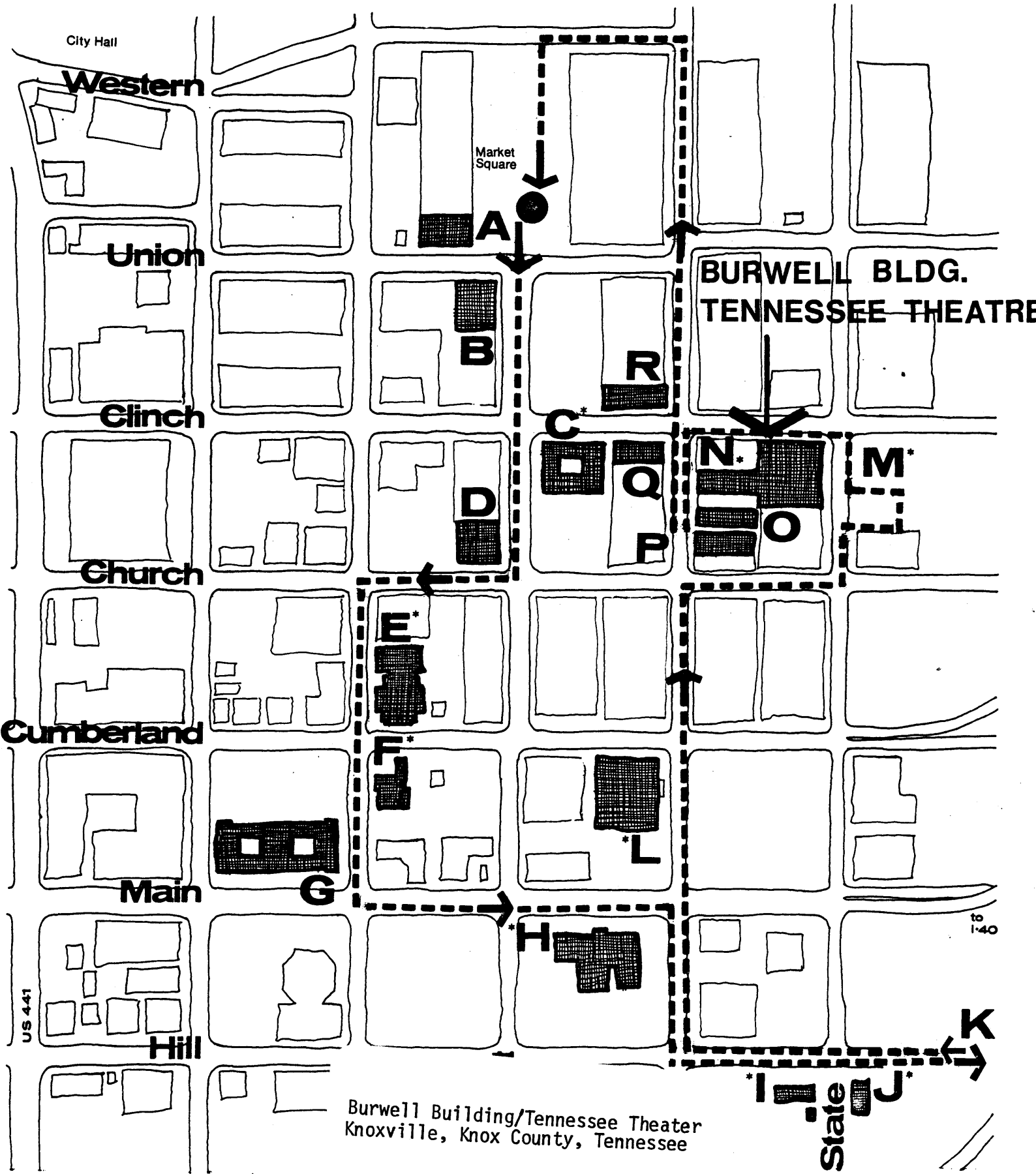


Burwell Building/Tennessee Theater
 Knoxville, Knox County, TN
 Knox County Tax Map 95-I
 Scale: 1"=100'

16:6000



The tour begins at the southwest corner of Market Square mall with the Kern building.



Burwell Building/Tennessee Theater
Knoxville, Knox County, Tennessee

* A number... refers to a Knox County architectural...

Knoxville Heritage. The number on the marker

There are a number of other buildings in the downtown area that may also be of interest but could not be included in this walking tour. Among these are the Knoxville City Hall on Western Avenue at Broadway; the L&N Railway passenger terminal across from City Hall; the Southern Railway passenger terminal on Depot Street, and the Jackson Avenue Warehouse district located in the 100 block of Jackson Avenue.

If you would like further information about architecturally/historically significant buildings in other areas of Knox County, or if

Childress and Associates: Architects

524a. S. Gay Street
P.O. Box 2641
Knoxville, Tennessee 37901

615 523-1917

GAY STREET

THEATRE ENTRANCE

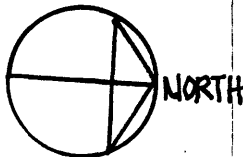
BURWELL BLDG.

JOURNAL PLACE

CLINCH AVENUE

ACCESSORY BUILDINGS

TENNESSEE THEATRE



Burwell Building/Tennessee Theater
Knoxville, Knox County, Tennessee

SCALE 1"=40'-0"

PROPERTY LINE

STATE STREET