

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 04000299

Property Name: Strand Theater

County: Walsh State: North Dakota

Multiple Name _____

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.


Signature of the Keeper

April, 15, 2004
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8: Significance

The closing date of the Period of Significance is hereby revised to read "1954" in keeping with National Register policy that significance within the past fifty years be justified as having exceptional importance. For the same reason, "1977" is hereby being dropped as a Significant Date.

The North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional 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 Strand Theatre
other names/site number 32 WA 587New Strand Theatre; Strand Twin Theatre; Deluxe Theatre; Strand Deluxe Theatre

2. Location

street & number 618 Hill Avenue N/A not for publication
city or town Grafton vicinity
state North Dakota code ND county Walsh code 099 zip code 58237

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title *Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr.* 2-26-04
Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr. Date
State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I, hereby certify that this property is:
 - entered in the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Edson Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 4/14/04

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	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION: theatre

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION: theatre

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls CONCRETE
roof ASPHALT
other PORCELAIN-ENAMELED STEEL

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)

- 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" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a 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.)

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:

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1946 - 1977

Significant Dates

1946, 1947, 1977

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Crosier, Perry E. & Son; Geston & Hanson

Strand Theatre
Name of Property

Walsh, ND
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	14	6 1 7 6 2 0	5 3 6 3 7 7 0	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Blain Fandrich/historian

organization Ethnoscience date December 10, 1998

street & number P. O. Box 30577 telephone (406)252-9163

city or town Billings state MT zip code 59107-0577

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 TOM HENDRIKSEN

street & number P.O. Box 72 telephone 701-352-0825

city or town Grafton state ND zip code 58237

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Strand Theatre
Walsh County, ND

Description

The current Strand Theatre is a three-story Art Moderne building constructed between 1946-1947. The building has an L-shape plan consisting of a 34-foot north-south by 131.5-foot east-west lobby and auditorium section with a 16-foot north-south by 40-foot east-west wing consisting of a boiler room and an apartment section. The building is oriented east-west, with the main entrance on the west side, facing Hill Avenue. The lobby is located in the west end of the building and the auditorium in the east end of the building. The boiler room and apartment wing is attached to the east end of the south wall and extends south. The building is constructed of brick, concrete, stucco, and steel. The Strand Theatre was constructed in the Art Moderne style, primarily defined in the main entrance which fronts onto Hill Avenue. Characteristics of the Art Moderne style exhibited by the theatre include smooth exterior wall surfaces, a flat roof line, curved wall elements (e.g. the ticket booth and marquee) and linear design motifs (e.g. horizontal-emphasis stripes on the ticket booth, vertical color panels, and geometric door detailing). Specific exterior features include porcelain-enameled steel panels, a marquee with attraction board and channel-lighted sign letters, movie poster frames, a ticket booth, and six entry doors.

The theatre rests on an elevated concrete foundation with return-air and pipe tunnels. The north, south, and east exterior walls of the theatre are constructed of brick covered with stucco. The roof is flat with coped parapets on the north and south walls. Steel slab doors are located in the north and south corners of the east wall of the building. The east wall of the wing has a second floor bay window, added in 1977, set above a boarded-over first floor window. The wing has an interior chimney made of stucco covered brick that extends above the theatre roof-line.

The west-side exterior of the theatre is composed of porcelain-enameled steel panels and horizontal louvers, both attached to an underlying brick wall – the only remaining piece of the 1914 theatre, which burned down in 1945. The steel panels are approximately three and one-half feet square and have a porcelain enamel coating. Panels are colored either suntan or maroon. The maroon panels form a broad vertical band in the center of the wall running from above the marquee to the roof-line. Within this band are two sets of horizontal louvers. These louvers allow light into the theatre office on the mezzanine level, and into the original projection room on the second floor. This band is flanked by suntan-colored panels on both the north and south sides of the wall. A horizontal band of maroon panels is also set at ground level, flanking the entry way, below the poster frames.

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Strand Theatre
Walsh County, ND

Description (continued)

A ticket booth is located in the center of the first floor and flanked by three doors and one poster frame on each side. The ticket booth has a convex-curved lower wall of suntan-colored porcelain-enameled steel panels accented by a pair of narrow maroon bands below the three glass ticket windows which are set in stainless steel frames. The ticket booth was closed off from the interior of the theatre in 1977. The booth is now used as a display window. Three entry doors stand on either side of the ticket booth, six doors total. Each door originally had a large glass panel set into a wood frame with a stepped geometric pattern in an upper corner. The glass panel was replaced in 1977 by a wood panel with a single, fixed, diamond-shape window in the center of the upper portion of the door.

A movie poster frame is located on either side of the doorways (i.e., the lower north and south corners of the west wall). The movie poster frames consist of recessed shadow boxes, covered with glass, which are individually lighted. A narrow maroon stripe frames the doorway, ticket booth, and poster frame composition.

A 24-foot wide, curved marquee is centered above the doorways. The base of the marquee stands 10 feet above the sidewalk and projects 12 feet from the building. Three metal support rods anchor the marquee to the facade. The marquee has a back-lit attraction board and channel-lighted sign letters that spell "STRAND" on the north and south sides. Lighted yellow letters that spell "TWIN" were added to the west side of the marquee in 1977. The Strand Theatre marquee design augments and emphasizes the streamlined Art Moderne style of the theatre exterior through the use a convex-curved shape with stainless steel trim. The marquee was designed specially for the Strand Theatre by the architectural firm of Perry E. Crosier & Son, Inc., of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The streamlined Art Moderne style of the Strand Theatre's exterior remains intact. As already noted, only three minor alterations to the west-side exterior have been made over the years. These alterations are: 1) the replacement of the large glass door panels with wooden panels inset with small, fixed, diamond-shaped windows; 2) the addition of lighted letters that spell "TWIN" to the marquee; and 3) the conversion of the ticket booth into a display window. The ticket booth conversion consists only of a sign board placed behind the booth glass. The external appearance of the booth remains otherwise unaltered. The only other exterior alteration is a bay window that was added to the second story east (rear) wall of the wing. All of these minor exterior alterations were made in 1977, when the theatre interior was renovated.

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Strand Theatre
Walsh County, ND

Description (continued)

The interior of the Strand Theatre was also designed in the Art Moderne style. The interior of the theatre is divided into four levels: the basement, the main auditorium and entry, the mezzanine office level, and the balcony (now the Strand 2 Theatre). The basement, a ventilation/crawl space level, is constructed of concrete and is accessed through the boiler room. The crawl space is essentially a 5-foot wide, 4-foot high concrete tube that extends the length of the theatre. During the 1950s, the crawl space was stocked with survival rations and was designated a fallout shelter.

The main floor originally consisted of eight rooms, including a lobby, foyer, auditorium, two washrooms, two closets, and a boiler room. The main floor now has 11 rooms, adding a "cry room" (for parents with crying children), a projection booth, and a storage room to the original rooms. Entering the building from the west, one comes into the lobby. The floor is made of terrazzo that was overlaid with acrylic tile in 1977. The walls are covered with pigmented structural glass and the ceiling is covered with acoustic tile. The original ticket booth is located in the center of the west wall, and functioned as a combined interior/exterior ticket booth. It is now closed from the interior. The center portion of the original foyer has been converted into a ticket booth and concession area. The wall separating lobby and foyer has two archways flanking the ticket booth. These archways originally had square upper corners, but were given a rounded shape in 1977. In addition to the concession stand, the foyer has stairwells in the northeast and southeast corners leading to the second floor. The men's washroom, which is located behind the south lobby wall, is accessed via an entryway under the south stair. The women's washroom is likewise located behind the north wall of the lobby and is entered under the north stair. A closet is located under each of the stairwells. The stairwells still have their original Art Moderne concave-curved corners, with inset concave, tall, vertical rectangular plastic light boxes.

A transverse hallway spans the building's width behind the foyer. It provides access to the auditorium projection booth, which was added in 1977. The hallway and the booth extend into what was originally the rear part of the seating area. The projection booth houses a Super-Simplex movie projector that was originally installed in 1947 at the rival Zelda Theatre, which was razed after a fire in November 1976. The movie projector survived the fire and was installed in the Strand Theatre in 1977, after the Strand was converted into a twin theatre.

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Strand Theatre
Walsh County, ND

Description (continued)

The largest room in the theatre is the first floor auditorium (now the Strand One Theatre), which still retains many of its original Art Moderne features. The walls are acoustic tile and plaster. The white acoustic tiles and blue plaster form a curved geometric design on the north and south walls of the auditorium.¹ Two curved light walls are formed by glass block fronts backed by two neon lights each, one blue and one red. The front of each light wall is composed of 8" square glass blocks, five columns across and 27 rows high (i.e., a total of 135 glass blocks each, 27 of which are curved). These walls are 18 feet tall and flank the stage area, just in front of the rear emergency exit ramps.

The auditorium seating is arranged with seven seats across the center and four seats on either side, with aisles separating the center seats from the side seats. Blueprints indicate that the original auditorium seating capacity was 438 people. The current seating capacity is 258 people, excluding the "cry room" capacity of four people, with the extra space having gone to the new projection booth and hallway in 1977. The auditorium seats are original, though they have been repainted and re-upholstered several times. The original color scheme of the seats was red. The seat frames are currently painted blue with cream trim and covered with blue vinyl seat cushions and blue, white, and black herringbone back rest covers. The light boxes and the wall design, along with the seating, are the dominant stylistic features of the auditorium, all of which still convey the original 1940s Art Moderne character of the theatre.

The boiler room is located in the wing attached to the southeast corner of the auditorium. Though the lobby once used a boiler system for heat, the main theatre always used a forced-air heating and cooling system. The heating and air conditioning equipment in the boiler room has been replaced twice since the theatre was completed in 1947. The entire building now uses forced-air.

The mezzanine floor contains the theatre office and a small stairwell leading to the second floor projection booth. The office consists of a 29-foot, 1-inch north-south by 9-foot, 4-inch east-west room with two windows in the west wall overlooking the marquee. The windows are fronted on the exterior by porcelain-enameled steel louvers. There were also two other windows originally located in the west wall, which was part of the first Strand Theatre, that were closed up on the inside and covered over on the outside with porcelain covered steel plates when the theatre was

¹ See "Longitudinal Section," *New Strand Theatre, Grafton, N. Dak.* Minneapolis, Minn.: Perry E. Crosier & Son, [1946]. Blueprints.

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Strand Theatre
Walsh County, ND

Description (continued)

rebuilt in 1946-47. A non-structural wall has been added at the north end of the office to create a closet. The stairwell leading to the original projection booth (now the Strand 2 projection booth) is accessed through a fireproof steel door at the mezzanine landing in the south stairwell.

The second floor was originally a balcony overlooking the main auditorium. The balcony was closed and converted into a separate theatre in 1977. The decision to convert the balcony into a second theatre was primarily motivated by economic pressure from competing theatre complexes in the nearby city of Grand Forks, North Dakota, but spurred on because of the fire that closed the Zelda Theatre in 1976. During the renovation, all of the original seating was replaced, the balcony platform was extended, the lighting was replaced, and a stage with projection screen was added. Some of the original wall fabric was retained, including acoustic tile and plaster on the north and south walls, but this is currently concealed by wall curtains.

The Strand Theatre retains excellent external physical integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The interior also retains many of its original Art Moderne details, including the balcony stairwells, the lobby and auditorium wall cladding, and the auditorium glass block decorative lighting.

Statement of Significance

The Strand Theatre is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C. The Strand Theatre meets criterion A because of its important role in the social history of Grafton, where it is known for its tradition of community service and for its implementation of innovative entertainment and marketing ideas. Many of the latter were soon imitated by other theatres throughout the region. The Strand Theatre's history of active community involvement includes the tradition of a free Christmas matinee for the children of the Grafton State School.² Its innovative entertainment ideas, such as the regular showing of foreign language films, demonstrate a tradition of social responsibility and community understanding far surpassing that of other theatres within the region. This established a unique place for the Strand Theatre within Grafton's history. The period of significance for the Strand Theatre under criterion A extends from 1946 to the present and links the history of the original 1915 Strand Theatre building with the history of the current Strand Theatre building constructed

² Listed in the NRHP on November 6, 1996.

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Strand Theatre
Walsh County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

on the same site in 1946-1947. The Strand Theatre is eligible for listing under criterion C because of its locally-rare Art Moderne architectural style and its unusual exterior and interior cladding materials, including porcelain-enameled steel panels on the facade and pigmented structural glass in the lobby. It is the only remaining example of post-World War II Art Moderne commercial architecture in Walsh County.

Historic Overview

The town of Grafton, North Dakota, is located in Walsh County approximately 40 miles south of the Canadian border and 12 miles west of the Red River of the North, which is the border between North Dakota and Minnesota.³ A post office was established at the townsite in 1879 by Thomas E. Cooper, and named Grafton for the New Hampshire county where his wife was born. Two years later, in 1881, the original Grafton townsite was platted and designated the county seat of newly-formed Walsh County. Both the Great Northern railroad and the Northern Pacific railroad reached Grafton the same year. These events help to explain the rapid growth of Grafton, which boasted a population of 2,000 by 1883, the year that it was incorporated as a city.⁴

Grafton's first motion picture theatre, the Bijou, opened in 1908. Little is known of the Bijou Theatre, known as a show hall, other than that it was a false front, wood frame building located on the west side of the 400 block of Hill avenue (two blocks north of the future Strand Theatre). John Piller, one of the founders and later sole owner of the Bijou Theatre, retained ownership of the Bijou until 1914, when he and his family moved to Leeds, North Dakota. Mr. Piller returned to Grafton in 1916 and became manager and part owner of the Strand Theatre.

In the meantime, another movie theatre, the Empress, had opened in 1914. It was located across the street from the Bijou Theatre. Like the Bijou, the Empress was not originally constructed as a theatre, but was a billiard hall that was converted to a motion picture theatre in 1914. The fact that two theatres were in operation in Grafton by 1914 suggests that movies were rapidly

³ *Grafton Illustrated: A 100 Year Look at Grafton, North Dakota, 1882-1982* (Grafton, N. Dak.: Grafton Centennial Corporation and the City of Grafton, 1982) p. 6.

⁴ Wick, Douglas A., *North Dakota Place Names* (Bismarck, N. Dak.: Hedemarken Collectibles, 1988), p. 78.

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Strand Theatre
Walsh County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

becoming a popular source of entertainment. Increasing numbers of people were willing to pay the five or ten cent admission price for the one hour silent movie feature. The growth of this entertainment market was not lost on other local entrepreneurs, several of whom opened the Strand Theatre, Grafton's first purpose-built motion picture theatre, in 1915.

The Strand Theatre is located on lots 5 and 6 of Block 30 of the original Grafton townsite. It was on this site that J. O. Lein and C. A. Heen constructed the original Strand Theatre, a motion picture and live performance theatre with a seating capacity of approximately 500 people. Design of the theatre was completed by fall of 1914 and construction began at that time. The land was finally purchased from John and Margaret Cashel in April 1915. The Strand opened in May, 1915, with a capacity audience screening the motion picture "Caprice," starring Mary Pickford. The Strand, also referred to as the Deluxe Theatre, was an instant success and soon forced the closing of its two rival movie theatres, the Bijou and the Empress. By 1918, the Strand was the only motion picture theatre remaining in Grafton. The Strand also became the preferred choice for live performances, replacing the Opera House which was torn down in the early 1920s. The partnership which had created the Strand, however, dissolved when C. A. Heen sold his interest in the theatre to John Piller in 1916. By 1921, John Lein, previously owner of the Bijou, had obtained full ownership of the theatre.

It was under John Lein's ownership that the Strand began its long tradition of community service. Because the local school did not have proper facilities, Lein donated the use of the Strand for high school plays, concert performances, and graduation ceremonies.⁵ The first high school graduation ceremony held at the theatre was in 1921. School use of the theatre continued until 1936, when the Central school was completed.

Mr. Lein was also an entertainment innovator in Walsh county during the mid 1920s. He began to employ a live orchestra on Friday and Saturday nights. Orchestra members were local residents, and the variety of instruments used in the orchestra included piano, violin, saxophone, trombone, drums and sousaphone.⁶ The use of an orchestra continued until the end of the silent movie era in the late 1920s.

⁵ Prior to 1921 the highschool graduation had been held in the opera house.

⁶ *Grafton Illustrated*, p. 213.

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Strand Theatre
Walsh County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

John Lein signed a contract-for-deed on the Strand Theatre with Red River Enterprises in 1935. Red River Enterprises was a Minnesota corporation established in Hallock, a town approximately 52 miles northeast of Grafton. The president of Red River Enterprises was Oscar Henriksen, who had been manager of the Strand Theatre since 1924. Henriksen was a banker in Minnesota, probably in Hallock, before moving to Grafton. This might explain why Red River Enterprises was incorporated in Minnesota. Red River Enterprises also operated the Grand Theatre in Hallock, which it purchased in the late 1930s. It became the formal owner of the Strand in May 1945, when it proved up on the theatre's contract-for-deed. Red River Enterprises expanded its theatre operations in 1971 with construction of the Star Dust 17 outdoor theatre just west of Grafton on North Dakota State Highway 17. It also purchased Grafton's Zelda Theatre, which had been built in 1947, in 1976. The corporation became defunct in the mid 1980s.⁷

The first task of Red River Enterprises was a renovation of the theatre interior, completed in 1935. Unfortunately, no details regarding it are available. Despite the Strand's changed ownership and appearance in 1935, its history of community service and entertainment innovation, started under John Lein, continued under the management of Oscar Henriksen. As already noted, when the Central school was completed in 1936, the Strand was no longer needed for school functions. Like his predecessor, however, Oscar Henriksen, had a strong sense of community. According to his son, Oscar believed that one should always give back something to the community.⁸ In keeping with this philosophy, Oscar Henriksen began a free Christmas matinee for children at the Grafton State School, then known as the North Dakota Feeble-Minded Institution. This event became an instant success with the children at the school. The first special Christmas matinee was held in 1935, with the cost of the matinee entirely funded by the Strand Theatre. Due to rising costs, the Strand began soliciting support for the matinee from area businesses in 1980.⁹ The response was immediate and positive, thus maintaining what is

⁷ Contract-for-deed, vol. 55, p. 487, on file at the Walsh County Court House, Grafton, N. Dak.; Contract-for-deed, vol. 67, p. 52, on file at the Walsh County Court House, Grafton, N. Dak.; Contract-for-deed, vol. 123, p. 174, on file at the Walsh County Court House, Grafton, N. Dak.; Grafton Illustrated, p. 214-215.

⁸ T. Arlo Henriksen, personal communication 1998.

⁹ T. Arlo Henriksen, personal communication 1998.

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Strand Theatre
Walsh County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

recognized as an important community tradition. The special Christmas matinee is still a much anticipated event among the children at the Grafton State School, as it has been for the past 64 years.

Oscar Henriksen also introduced the popular "Take a Chance" night on Thursday evenings. Beginning in 1935, tickets were sold at a reduced price to an unknown movie. People enjoyed the mystery of not knowing which movie would be shown, and also appreciated the nine-cent admission during the Great Depression. "Take a Chance" night was often sold out, and continued as an important marketing strategy until the mid 1960s. It was soon imitated by other area theatres. Local residents still have fond memories of "Take a Chance" night, which they also remember as a weekly social event. Oscar Henriksen further demonstrated his marketing abilities and his understanding of the community by booking Scandinavian-language films, which were also popular, particularly among the older immigrant population. The Scandinavian language films were replaced in the mid-1960s by Spanish-language films in response to the diminishing Scandinavian-speaking population and the increasing Latino population, many of whom were migrant workers. The regular screening of foreign language films was a new idea, and further established the Strand as a unique and innovative theatre in the early 1940s.¹⁰

The original Strand Theatre was destroyed by fire in April of 1945. Though plans were made immediately to rebuild the theatre, wartime rationing delayed them. It was not until 1946 that plans for the new Strand Theatre were completed by Perry E. Crosier & Son of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and construction began on the new theatre. In the meantime, Oscar Henriksen started showing films at the old National Guard Armory.¹¹ He retained use of the armory as a substitute theatre until 1947, when construction of the new Strand was completed.

The new Strand Theatre was constructed on the site of the original Strand Theatre, using the original front or west wall as part of the structure. The fashionable Art Moderne style was

¹⁰ *Grafton Illustrated*, p. 214-215.

¹¹ *Grafton Illustrated*, p. 215. The old National Guard Armory building was located on the 600 block at the corner of 7th Street and Hill Avenue, one-half block south of the Strand Theatre. The old armory building has since been razed and a pharmacy now stands at that location.

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Strand Theatre
Walsh County, ND

Statement of Significance (continued)

chosen for the new theatre. While rare in this region, the Art Moderne style is distinctive, and had the connotation of trendy, West coast theatres. Some general characteristics of Art Moderne are smooth wall surfaces, horizontal grooves and lines, and curved walls, all of which are present in the Strand Theatre. The choice of porcelain-enameled steel panels for the exterior cladding was not common in this region. The result of these unusual architectural choices was a unique and attractive theatre that opened on June 14, 1947.

The newly-rebuilt Strand faced new challenges. The Zelda Theatre opened in August of 1947, presenting the Strand Theatre with its first rival theatre since the Bijou and Empress Theatres had closed circa 1916. The Zelda Theatre, which was also a post-World War II Art Moderne-style building, was located along Hill avenue on the west side of the 300 block (i.e., across the street and three block south of the Strand). The following year, Grafton was flooded during the spring snow melt. Oscar Henriksen, however, was ready to protect his new theatre from the flood. Heeding warnings that a flood was possible, he gathered wood, sealant and other materials (nails, hammers, etc.) which he stored at the theatre. Thus, when the flood water started rising, he constructed a barrier across the front and rear entryways with the stockpiled supplies and kept the water out. The Strand Theatre remained essentially unchanged for the next 30 years, when some interior renovation was done in 1977.

Oscar Henriksen sold the theatre to his sons, Richard and Arlo, in 1953. In 1958, Richard sold his share to Arlo. The theatre is now run by Arlo's son, Tom, representing three generations of family ownership.

Two primary factors prompted the decision to renovate the Strand Theatre. The first factor was the increasing competition from a multi-screen cinema complex that had been recently constructed in Grand Forks, North Dakota, 45 miles southeast of Grafton. Mr. Henriksen was concerned that unless the Strand could offer more movies, it would lose business to Grand Forks theatres.¹² The second factor prompting the renovation was the sudden loss of the Zelda Theatre, which had been purchased by Arlo Henriksen in the spring of 1976. Rather than rebuild the Zelda, which was ravaged by fire in November 1976, Henriksen decided to convert the Strand from a single screen theatre into a twin screen theatre. Renovation of the Strand was done in 1977.

¹² T. Arlo Henriksen, personal communication 1998.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

The most notable change was conversion of the balcony into a second theatre. With this, the Strand became the first Twin theatre in the area. Other modifications included the creation of additional storage rooms on both the main and second floor and the creation of a projection room at the rear of the main auditorium. In keeping with the theatre's long tradition of innovation, a special room, known as a cry room, was also added on the main floor auditorium. This room allows parents of children who need special attention, such as feeding, or changing, or calming, to continue watching the movie without disturbing other theatre patrons. Many of the original interior Art Moderne details still remain, including wall finishes (e.g. pigmented structural glass in the lobby, acoustic tiles and plaster in the main auditorium) and the auditorium and stairwell light fixtures. The steel fireproofing of the first floor auditorium seating and the second floor projection booth are also details reflecting the period of construction. The original Art Moderne exterior of the theatre has remained unchanged since its construction in 1947.

In conclusion, the Strand Theatre is the only remaining example of regionally rare post-World War II Art Moderne architecture in Walsh county. This architectural style, with its exterior porcelain-enameled steel panels and interior pigmented glass, gives the Strand Theatre a distinctive and eye-catching appearance that stands out among Grafton's surrounding commercial buildings. The Strand is also notable as the only building on the block, and one of the very few in downtown Grafton, that retains its original 1940s exterior and its original function. The theatre continues its strong and distinctive tradition of community service and entertainment by continuing its 64 year old tradition of delighting children of the Grafton State School with a special Christmas matinee, a treat which the children look forward to with as much anticipation now as they did in 1935. The Strand Theatre also continues its history of entertainment innovation through the occasional presentation of live plays, magic shows and musical performances. Thus, in form and function, the Strand Theatre continues its long tradition as an architectural landmark and community supporter that originally made it a unique trend setter throughout Walsh County and the surrounding area.

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Verbal boundary description

Lots 5 and 6 of Block 30 in the original Grafton townsite, Walsh County, North Dakota.

Boundary justification

The New Strand Theatre has been located at this site since it was constructed in 1946-1947. This is also the site of the original Strand Theatre that was completed in 1915 and destroyed by fire in 1945.