

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

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

For HCRS use only  
received JUN 17 1980  
date entered AUG 21 1980

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

**1. Name**

historic The Coliseum Theatre

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number 404 Taylor St.  not for publication

city, town Corinth  vicinity of congressional district First

state Mississippi code 28 county Alcorn code 3

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mr. Herbert W. Welch

street & number 3800 West 80th Lane

city, town Merrillville  vicinity of state Indiana 46410

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Chancery Clerk  
Alcorn County Courthouse

street & number Waldron Street

city, town Corinth state Mississippi

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title \_\_\_\_\_ has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date \_\_\_\_\_  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

|  |                                       |   |   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Condition</b>                         |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                              | <b>Check one</b>                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent       | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> altered              | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date: _____        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair            | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   |   |

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Coliseum Theatre has been and remains today the most impressive and monumental theatre space in Corinth, Mississippi. Seating virtually one-thousand people on its main floor, mezzanine, and two-tiered balcony, the Coliseum is discreetly cosmopolitan in a small-town grid. Located on a secondary cross-street of Corinth's central business district with its entry flanked by small businesses occupying its front-most rental spaces and by adjoining commercial properties, the Coliseum is sensitively massed in its two-story entry pavilion to relate to the brick structures across the street of similar height. Best described as commercial-vernacular, the unsymmetrically proportioned front facade is quietly yet effectively punctuated by its two-story, three-centered entry arch and two smaller arched entries, one three-centered and the other semi-circular. The two frontal bays are defined by quion pilasters with entry being through the smaller right-hand bay. Basically an ell-shaped plan, the theater occupies approximately one-third of a block with the short "leg" of the ell being the stage support facilities. Longitudinally, the building varies in height through eleven irregularly spaced bays defined by plain brick pilasters. From front to back (entry to stage), the bays correspond to the interior spaces as follows:

- 2 bays---entry vestibule (2 stories)
- 3 bays---balcony loft (3 stories)
- 5 bays---general seating (2-1/2 stories)
- 1 bay ---scenery loft (3 stories)

Constructed of brick in a Flemish bond, two shades of masonry are used to show separation between the entry pavilion and the auditorium--the former being of blonde brick with the latter of a darker brick. Windows on the second story of the front facade are of an undistinguished casement variety painted to match the brick. Parapet walls with tile copings effectively conceal the gently sloping roofs. Sculptural air monitors ("pigeons") dot the roof of the balcony and are visible from nearby buildings. In summary, the Coliseum makes a generous urban gesture: respecting the existing fabric of buildings while quietly declaring its own special nature.

Upon entering the Coliseum, the degree of that quiet is forsaken. The entry hall is a two-story space having a balustraded balcony over the entry way. With wainscoting of marble, paving of black-and-white mosaic tile, and light coffers and cornices of ornate plaster egg-and-dart mouldings, the entry hall provides a processional prelude to the spaces beyond. Through a doorway on axis with the entry hall and perpendicular to the direction of entry is the monumental stairway of the inner vestibule. With treads and risers of marble and an ornate balustrade of the same polished stone, this stair leads to the mezzanine seating level which has a visual tie to the inner vestibule through a large semi-circular opening in the floor between with a balustrade of the same ornate design but lathe-turned in wood. The stairway continues upward in a less dramatic fashion to the balcony seating level. On both the mezzanine and balcony ceiling planes are four circular leaded stained glass lights, edged in plaster moulding, which relate to a larger light of the same variety in the main space. That space is the general seating area on the main level of the Coliseum. A dramatic three-story space with a simple two-aisle seating arrangement, this space has an ornate ceiling plane. A large circular leaded stained glass light is centered there. Square air registers with ornamental metal grills are diagonally placed at the four corners and connected by an elegant plaster moulding. The plastered cornice in this space is of heavy, plastered egg-and-dart mouldings. Procession toward the stage is continued by what are

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Continuation sheet

Item number 7, 8, 10

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## 7 - DESCRIPTION

essentially two proscenium walls (the intermediate proscenium and the stage proscenium). The intermediate proscenium has a three-centered arched opening which splays inward while barrel vaulting to the stage proscenium which terminates in a similar but smaller three-centered arch, relating to the three-centered arches of the front facade. Decorating and surrounding the intermediate proscenium arch is a baroque plaster moulding. The side walls splaying toward the stage contain the proscenium boxes. Monumental semi-circular openings are incised in the walls and splay inward to a smaller semi-circular arched doorway. Above the larger arch is an elaborate plastered entablature with a bracketed cornice and intricate egg-and-dart mouldings which is supported by two pairs of square fluted pilasters on raised bases with Ionic capitals. The doorway itself is entablatured and flanked by a pair of fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals. The semi-circular arched tympanum is decorated with baroque plastered reliefs. The stage proscenium terminates the procession toward the stage. Catching the barrel vault with a three-centered arch, the wall is punched by a lower proscenium arch with scallops at the springline and embellished by a baroque plaster moulding surround. The orchestra pit in front of the stage and the support facilities behind allow on stage the type and quality of physical drama with which the structure itself is visually replete.

## 8 - SIGNIFICANCE

The building is certainly worthy of recognition and preservation for historical reasons as well as for present day needs for the cultural, economic and educational development in the area. It could also serve as a focal point for the current downtown revitalization program. There is not an auditorium of this quality in a fifty mile radius that will seat nearly a thousand people. Local concert, school, dance, civic, religious and theatre organizations do not have adequate facilities for their programs and could make the building serve useful purposes. This building has qualities that will be beneficial to the area for today and tomorrow as well as being a monument to fine architectural design in Northeast Mississippi.

The Coliseum Theatre is architecturally significant in its neighborhood, city, and state: in its neighborhood, by respecting the scale, texture, and character of the surrounding architectural fabric; in the city, as a major public congregation space and physical reminder of the richness of the city's past; and in the state, as one of the last of a breed of shelters for culture built in a day when concern for architectural detail still equalled people's reverence of the arts.

Plans for adaptive use of the Coliseum Theatre, in addition to the original purposes, are to use it as an auditorium for lectures and special educational films for Corinth and Alcorn County Schools, small convention programs, Northeast Mississippi Museum lectures and Corinth Ministerial Association Community church services.

## 10 - GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

on the east and Cruise Street on the south. See attached drawing.

# 8. Significance

| Period                                    | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below    |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric      | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499        | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic     | <input checked="" 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/            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799        | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> music       | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899        | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement        | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> industry                      | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation     |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention                     |   | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)    |

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Coliseum Theatre, built in 1924, is significant for its historic associations with the cultural development in Northeast Mississippi. It was designed and built by the self-styled local architect, Mr. Benjamin Franklin Liddon. The theatre is a rare example of a fine classical architectural style not often seen in this area, and it is significant for the excellence of its craftsmanship and elaborate detailing.

Mr. Liddon, the grandson of a pioneer to the area, was a leader in cultural, educational and recreational development in Northeast Mississippi. He designed and constructed several notable buildings in Corinth during the early part of this century. Among these was the Coliseum Theatre which was designed as a palatial multi-purpose theatre when the movie industry was in its infancy. Many traveling shows played the Coliseum in old vaudeville days. Several famous people played there including a vaudeville child star by the name of Rosemarie who is seen on the television show "Hollywood Squares" today. Later Grand Ole Opry Stars Flatt and Scruggs, and cowboy comic Smiley Burnett performed there. In silent screen days the theatre was equipped with a theatre organ in the full orchestra pit.

The theatre remained in Mr. Liddon's family after his death and was successfully operated as a movie theatre until 1957. Then, his grandson, Alan Simmons, continued to run week-end and special films until the final closing in 1977.

Mr. Herbert W. Welch of Merrillville, Indiana purchased the property in 1977 and ran it unsuccessfully as a movie theatre for approximately one year when a new twin cinema proved to be too much competition. It has been closed since that time except on two occasions when groups were able to rent the building for a symphony concert and a local live theatre production. Mr. Welch has the property listed with a local real estate firm to be sold. There have been unsuccessful attempts so far to interest the city and county in purchasing the property for a civic auditorium.

There is no facility north of Meridian or south of Memphis and Jackson, Tennessee to compare with the Coliseum's accoustical and architectural qualities.

The theatre is of solid brick construction and its interior is ornately designed with a white marble staircase and balcony rail on the mezzanine, wainscoting, plaster friezes which were brought from Chicago to decorate the walls and ceilings. There are brass fixtures including the ticket booth in the outer lobby. Huge, stained, leaded glass light domes light the ceilings of the balconies and auditorium.

The stage was designed and equipped by a studio in New York City. It is complete, featuring a hardwood floor with a trap door to the basement which leads to the orchestra pit, heavy velvet curtains, footlights and top lights with dimmers, backdrop curtains, fly space for scenery, a motion picture sound system, and motion picture screen which can be "flown up" for stage performances.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Family records kept by the builder's granddaughter and grandson, Mrs. Frank Simmons and Mr. Alan Simmons of Corinth, Mississippi.

County Clerk's Office, Alcorn County Courthouse.

# 10. Geographical Data

**ITEM NOT VERIFIED**

Acreege of nominated property 1/3 city block

Quadrangle name Corinth, Miss.-Tenn.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UMT References

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

A 

|      |   |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 6 | 3       | 6 | 1 | 3 | 2        | 5 | 3 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 5 |
| Zone |   | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

B 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

C 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

G 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

H 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The property nominated is a rectangular building 50' wide by 84' with an extension on the south side which is 59' by 34' wide on block 126 of the Mitchell and Mask survey of the City of Corinth. The entrance facing west is on Taylor Street bounded by an alley on the north, Webster Street

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

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mrs. H. L. Williams, Jr., Historian/George Johnston, Architect (Ledbetter Associates)

organization date May, 1980

street & number 808 Fillmore Street/614 Waldron Street telephone 601-287-1328/286-9202

city or town Corinth state Mississippi 38834

# 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Robert A. Hilliard

title State Historic Preservation Officer date June 10, 1980

For HCERS use only

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

W. Ray  
Keeper of the National Register

date 8/21/80

Attest: Curt Dubois

date 8/18/80