# NOMINATION PROPOSAL - FLORIDA NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

	TYPE ALL ENTRIE	S COMPLETE ALL SEC	CTIONS	
NAME MRNS#	27			
HISTORIC		e de la companya de l		
Edwards	Theatre			
AND/OR COMMON	a Theater of th	he Arts		
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LOCATION		**		
STREET & NUMBER 57	N. Pineapple A	Ave <del>nue</del>		
COMO CO TO		N7 / A	Composition	
Sarasota	<del></del>	VICINITY OF N/A	Sarasota	
Florida			-	
CLASSIFICATION	ON	•		
CATEGORY O	WNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESI	ENT USE
_DISTRICTPUI	BUC	_OCCUPIED	AGRICULTURE	MUSEUM
	IVATE	UNOCCUPIED	_COMMERCIAL	PARK
STRUCTUREBO	TH UBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDENC
118	PROCESS	XYES: RESTRICTED	XENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT	RELIGIOUS
	ING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIAL	TRANSPORTATION
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#### CONDITION

\_EXCELLENT \_\_

¥.GOOD \_FAIR \_\_DETERIORATED

\_RUINS

CHECK ONE

\_\_UNALTERED

CHECK ONE

X ORIGINAL SITE

\_MOVED DATE\_\_\_\_

#### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND OHIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

#### SUMMARY OF PRESENT AND ORIGINAL PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located at #57 North Pineapple Avenue, the three and approximately 4-1/2 story Mediterranean Revival Style stucco facade building was built as the Edwards Theatre according to the plans of Jacksonville architect Roy A. Benjamin and opened on Built on a reinforced concrete foundation, the steel-frame and April 10, 1926. masonry construction building was a mixed-use complex which provided entertainment, retail and office space and residential use facilities. The rectangular plan structure was divided into three blocks. The three-story entrance block which faces North Pineapple Avenue provided eight shops at the ground floor level, twelve offices located at the second floor and twelve furnished apartments located on the third floor. The second block located behind the commercial entrance division was occupied The third was the  $4-\frac{1}{2}$ - story block located at the west by the theatre auditorium. elevation provided eleven dressing rooms on four floors and the stage facilities. entrance facade was designed in the Mediterranean Revival Style and the cream colored stucco facade was characterized by the use of ornamental imitation stone quoins, label lintels, piers, engaged columns and a niched recess located at the northeast corner of the entrance facade. The five-bay ground floor provided four shop windows set within semi-circular arched surrounds and the entrance located at the third or center bay was set within a segmental arched opening. The second floor was divided into ni bays by two-over-two, double-hung-sash windows. The center three bays of the third floor were originally occupied by an open loggia with bracketed capitaled paired posts and a wood beamed ceiling. The two towers which flanked the open loggia were each pierced by three, two-over-two, double-hung-sash windows. By 1930 the open loggia was replaced by a stuccoed masonry wall, pierced by three, two-over-two, double-hung-sash windows. The wall and fenestration pattern is remarkably sensitive and creates a nine-bay facade similar to the second floor fenestration pattern. auditorium provided a raked bank of 1,500 seats originally and the Mediterranean Revival decoration included a plaster and beamed ceiling, niches with quoined surrounds, tile panel insets and at the cornice level appeared ornamental plaster cartouches. During alterations of the 1930's and 1950's, the original orchestra pit was covered over and the Robert Morton Pipe Organ was removed. The interior and exterior are in the course of restoration for use as the headquarters of the Sarasota Theater of the Arts. The interior will accommodate concerts, operatic, theater and dance programs. 3

#### TEXT SUPPORTING SUMMARY OF PRESENT AND ORIGINAL PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The three and approximately 4-½ story steel frame and masonry construction Mediterranean Revival Style building located at 57 North Pineapple Avenue was built in 1926 according to the plans of Jacksonville architect, Roy A. Benjamin and opened on the 10th of April, 1926 as the Edwards Theatre. Built on a reinforced concrete foundation, the mixed-use complex originally provided entertainment, commercial, office and residential-use facilities. In addition to the theatre auditorium, back stage and dressing room facilities, located at the western two-thirds of the building, eight shops were located above the theatre at the second floor level, and twelve furnished apartments

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were provided at the third floor level of the front or easternmost block of the complex. The rectangular-planned structure was divided into three distinct blocks with the commercial, office and residential spaces located in the three-story entrance block at the first, second and third floors respectively; theatre auditorium located within the second block or division; and the  $4-\frac{1}{2}$  story third division located at the western end of the property housed the stage area with dressing rooms located on four floors.

The entrance facade block located at the east or North Pineapple Avenue elevation of the complex was designed in the Mediterranean Revival Style and the cream colored stucco facade was embellished with ornamental stucco and plasterwork in imitation of stone. The ground floor was divided into five bays, marked by four semi-circular arched openings carried on piers and engaged cast stone columns. The openings surrounded fixed sheet glass shop windows with reinforced or leaded transoms above. Located at the third or central bay, the entrance is set within a segmental arch which was originally protected by a shed canvas awning. A triangular-shaped movie marquee was added above the entrance in the 1930's and a tesserae surround (probably dating from the 1950's) was also added to the entrance. Both the marquee and tesserae later accretions were removed from the building as part of a recent restoration campaign in July of 1983.8 The second story is divided into nine bays marked by two-over-two, double-hung-sash windows. Each second floor window is characterized by the use of projecting window sills and quoined surrounds. The center three bays of the third floor were formerly occupied by an open loggia, a wood trabeated form carried on carved wood posts with bracket capitals and wood protective railing. The ceiling of the loggia was beamed. 9 By 1930 the third floor loggia was enclosed and the open space was replaced by a stuccoed wall pierced by three two-over-two, double-hung-shased windows. 10 Although the original open loggia was removed, the replacement wall and fenestration pattern are remarkably sensitive. The third floor now reads as a nine bay facade. tower projections which flanked the central loggia at the third floor are each pierced by three, two-over-two, double-hung-sash windows. The center window of each tower (or the second and eighth bay of the currently nine-bay third floor) is topped by an ornate label hood molding or label lintel.

The upper northeast corner of the building was formerly the location of an illuminated, vertical sign, which announced the "Edwards Theatre." Below the vertical signboard, an ornamental niched recess surrounded by an elaborate quoined enframement, formerly held a statue which was removed at an unknown date. An arcuated shop window opening identical to the openings located at the east elevation pierces the ground floor first bay of the north elevation. An early artist's rendering of the Edward's Theatre which appeared in the Herald of 1926 shows a vacant lot located to the north of the Theatre. The site is currently occupied by a small-scaled, two-story building currently occupied by a catering business. The building abuts the northeast flank of the Theatre. By 1930 the adjoining building appears in a photograph of the Theatre in the Sarasota Visitors' Guide of 1930-31. At the roofline of the north elevation, a small, masonry chimney vent with conical cap and louvered vents projects above the roofline.

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side of the south elevation.

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The south elevation of the theatre complex is a stucco-facade divided into the three sections or blocks previously discussed. The first block is divided from the auditorium block by a flat roofed parapet which projects above the roof line of the entrance block at the south elevation. The first bay of the ground floor of the south elevation is pierced by a shop window set within a semi-circular opening. The upper two floors of the southeast elevation of the entrance block are pierced by two-over-two, double-hung-sash windows. Tile-screened vents are

located at the cornice level of the southeast elevation. The auditorium block is devoid of fenestration. The  $4-\frac{1}{2}$  story stage block is located at the southwest

The massive, approximately  $4-\frac{1}{2}$  story stage block looms at the west elevation. The fenestration pattern of the west elevation corresponds to the locations of the dressing rooms which are scattered throughout four floors.

The Edwards Theatre was given the epithet, the "Temple of Silent Art and Make Believe." 14 The original lobby had a wall surface of stucco, "tinted with rich brown and gold." 15 The ornamental plaster scroll-work created, "an appearance of the doorway to Dreamland." 16 The auditorium had a plaster and beamed ceiling, tile panel insets, three niches with quoin surrounds located at the second floor level, and at the cornice level, ornamental plaster cartouches appeared. proscenium arch was located at the west end of the auditorium block and the raked seating bank originally provided 1500 seats. 17 Originally there was a large orchestra pit which has been covered over. The original organ was a Robert Morton Pipe Organ which was removed in the mid-1930's. In the course of restoration, sections of the interior structural system have been revealed, exposing steel beams, poured concrete, and hollow-clay tile insets. The interior of the building is undergoing changes for use as the home of the former Asolo Opera Company, currently the Sarasota Opera Company. The architectural firm responsible for the new design of the interior is Skidmore, Owings and Merrill of Chicago, and the supervising architect with office in the building is Richard Young, and the Edwards Theatre is scheduled to re-open as the Sarasota Theater of the Arts in January of 1984. The scheduled interior changes will provide a space which will accommodate concerts, operatic, theater and dance programs. The original Edward's Theatre provided seating for 1,500. Current plans call for the provision of 700 seats in the first phase and 300 additional balcony seats at a later date. 19

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

 PERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC *	_ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	_LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
_1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
1600-1699	XARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	_SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
_1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	X_THEATER
1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	_TRANSPORTATION
<u>X</u> 1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	X_OTHER (SPECIFY) ASSOCIA
		INVENTION		tion with A. B.
				Edwards

SPECIFIC DATES opened April 10, 1926

BUILDER/ARCHITECT G. A. Miller, Tampa/ Roy A. Benjamin, Jacksonville, FL

#### SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The three and approximately 4-1/2 story Mediterranean Revival building located at 57 North Pineapple Avenue was built as the Edwards Theatre according to the plans of Jacksonville architect Roy A. Benjamin and opened on April 10, 1926.<sup>20</sup> Built on areinforced concrete foundation, the steel-frame and masonry construction theatre building was constructed by the G. A. Miller, Inc., construction company of Tampa, at a cost of \$250,000, on a lot purchased at approximately \$100,000 with additional interior expenditures totaling \$85,000 and a Robert Morton Pipe Organ purchased at a cost in excess of \$30,000.21 The theatre was developed by Mayor Arthur Britton Edwards, a significant figure in the development of Sarasota and was named in his honor. 22 Heralded as "one of the finest playhoues in all Florida," the Mediterranean Revival Style interior and exterior of the theatre complex, received the epithet, "Temple of Silent Art and Make Believe." 23 The architect of the mixed-use complex which included office, retail, theatre, stage and residential facilities, was recognized as a "master designer of amusement enterprises," in the South. 24 The construction firm, G. A. Miller, Inc., was responsible for several major later construction projects in the City of Sarasota including the Sarasota Herald Building (MRNS #18) and the Kress Building (MRNS #7). In later years the G. A. Miller Company was responsible for the erection of twenty Kress Company stores throughout Florida and the West. 25 The developer of the theatre complex, Arthur Britton Edwards, was responsible for opening the first real estate and insurance company in Sarasota. 26 In addition to his real estate endeavors, A. B. Edwards led an active political career, serving as the first elected tax assessor in 1907-1911 and as the first Mayor of the incorporated City of Sarasota with terms in 1914-1915, 1918-1919 and 1920-1921.<sup>27</sup> The theatre is representative of the third phase of the development of the City of Sarasota, and corresponds with the end of the Boom-time expansion of the City. The significant entertainment facility is undergoing restoration and rehabilitation as the Sarasota Theater of the Arts, a multi-faceted facility designed to accommodate concerts, ooperatic, theater and dance programs. The Chicago firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill is responsible for re-use plans and the center is to reopen in January of  $1984.^{28}$ 

#### STATEMENT SUPPORTING SUMMARY OF STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located at 57 North Pineapple Avenue, the three and approximately  $4-\frac{1}{2}$  story Edwards Theatre complex was built according to the plans of Jacksonville architect, Roy A. Benjamin and opened on April 10, 1926 with the program, "Skinners' Dress Suit."  $^{29-30}$  The Mediterranean Revival Style structure provided seating for 1500 and the interior which was designed by W. M. Holland was noted for its "costly decoration, rich furnishing and never-to-be-forgotten artisty." The Jacksonville architect,

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Roy A. Benjamin, was recognized as an amusement facility designer throughout the South. Built on a reinforced concrete foundation, the steel-frame and masonry construction theatre complex was a successful mixed-use complex offering retail, office, residential, theatre and stage facilities. Construction costs were estimated to be \$250,000, the lot represented an outlay of \$100,000 while the interior expenditures totaled \$85,000 with an additional expenditure of \$30,000 for the purchase of a Robert Morton Pipe Organ. 34

The Theatre was developed by and named in honor of Arthur Britton Edwards who was born in the Sarasota Bay Region in 1874 and opened the first real estate and insurance company in Sarasota, as a result of the Seaboard expansion into the region in 1903. 35 As an early booster of Sarasota, A. B. Edwards personally wrote to individuals who had contacted railroad companies requesting literature on Florida. 36 In addition to an active real estate and development career, A. B. Edwards served as the first elected Tax Assessor of the Town of Sarasota from 1907-1911. As the first Mayor of the incorporated City of Sarasota, Mayor Edwards served terms in 1914-1915, 1918-1919 and 1920-1921. 37 A. B. Edwards was instrumental in the creation of the County of Sarasota, the development of an improved road system and served as the president of the Sarasota Chamber of Commerce from 1922-1924. 38 As the developer of the Edwards Theatre complex, Mayor Edwards recognized the need for a large entertainment facility during the Boom expansion of the City. Although not the first entertainment facility to be built in the City of Sarasota, the Edwards Theatre was the largest and most sophisticated house which gained the epithet, "Temple of Silent Art and Make Believe." 39

G. A. Miller, Inc., the construction firm responsible for the erection of the Edwards Theatre, later built several major construction projects in Sarasota, including the Sarasota Herald Building (MRNS #18). Beginning in 1932, the G. A. Miller Company of Tampa was responsible for the erection of the Kress Store at 1442 Main Street, MRNS #7, and listed as the company's accomplishments, the construction of twenty Kress Company stores, ranging in location from St. Petersburg, Lakeland, Tampa, Ybor City, Fort Meyers and Daytona Beach in Florida to North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Washington and Montana. 40

The Edwards Theatre served as a significant entertainment facility with an offering of silent movies, vaudeville acts and opera. Significant entertainers who appeared at the house included George Jessel, 41 Sally Rand and Will Rogers. The dressing room walls located within the 4-½ story stage block at the west elevation of the complex served as an area for players' autographs. The graffiti-lined paneling of the dressing rooms has been removed and is safely stored in the Sarasota County Historical Archive, Sarasota. The Edwards Theatre was recognized as an historical structure by the Sarasota Historical Commission who issued an historical marker which was placed at the northeast corner of the structure in a ceremony which took place on April 15, 1983. The Edwards Theatre is currently undergoing restoration and rehabilitation according to the plans of the Chicago office of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill for re-use as a facility offering concerts, operatic, theatrical and dance programs. The re-used complex which is expected to open in January of 1984 will be known as the Sarasota Theater of the Arts. 45

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NOTES FOR NOMINATION PROPOSAL--FLORIDA NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES MULTIPLE RESOURCE NOMINATION SARASOTA

<sup>1</sup>Sarasota Herald. December 15, 1926. Section 1, p. 11. Located at Sarasota County Historical Archives. Sarasota, Florida.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Charlie Huisking, "Asolo Opera Officially Becomes Sarasota Opera Company." The Herald-Tribune. March 28, 1983.

<sup>4</sup>Sarasota Herald. December 15, 1926. Section 1, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

6Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Sarasota Herald. December 15, 1926. Section 1, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>John McCarthy. On-site inspection. July 1983.

9<sub>Ibid</sub>.

10Sarasota Visitors' Guide. 1930-31. On file Sarasota County Historical Archives.

11 Ibid.

12<sub>Ibid</sub>.

13Sarasota Visitors' Guide. 1930-1931.

14<sub>Ibid</sub>.

15<sub>Ibid</sub>.

16<sub>Ibid</sub>.

17<sub>Ibid</sub>.

18 Sarasota Herald-Tribune. March 28, 1983.

19 Charlie Huisking. "Asolo Opera Officially Becomes Sarasota Opera Company The Herald-Tribune. March 28, 1983.

20 Sarasota Herald. December 15, 1926. Section 1, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

22<sub>Ibid</sub>.

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# City of Sarasota

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- 23<sub>Ibid</sub>.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup>Sarasota Herald. November 19, 1932.
- <sup>26</sup>Karl Grismer. The Story of Sarasota. M. E. Russell, 1946, p. 301.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 300-302.
- <sup>28</sup>Charlie Huisking, "Asolo Opera Officially Becomes Sarasota Opera Company," The Herald-Tribune. March 28, 1983.
  - <sup>29</sup>Sarasota Herald. December 15, 1926. Section 1, p. 11.
  - <sup>30</sup>Grismer, p. 215.
  - 31 Sarasota Herald. December 15, 1926. Section 1, p. 11.
  - 32 Ibid.
  - 33<sub>Ibid</sub>.
  - 34 Ibid.
  - <sup>35</sup>Grismer, p. 301.
  - 36 Ibid.
  - <sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 300-302.
  - <sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 274, 300-302.
  - 39 Sarasota Herald. December 15, 1926. Section 1, p. 11.
  - 40 Ibid., November 29, 1932, full-page advertisement.
  - <sup>41</sup>Ibid., November 14, 1926.
  - $^{42}$ On-site inspection, Sarasota County Historical Archives, Sarasota, Florida.
- 43 Seigerman Associates, Inc., press release, "Sarasota County Historical Commission to Present Marker to Sarasota Theater of the Arts." April 15, 1983.
- 44 Charlie Huisking. "Asolo Opera Officially Becomes Sarasota Opera Company: The Herald-Tribune. March 28, 1983.

## 9 BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Grismer, Karl. The Story of Sarasota. M. E. Russell. Sarasota. 1946.

Huisking, Charlie. "Asolo Opera Officially Becomes Sarasota Opera Company."

Sarasota Herald Tribune. March 28, 1983.

Sarasota Herald. April 9, 1926. April 10, 1926. April 11, 1926. November 14, 1926.

December 15, 1926. November 29, 1932.

Sarasota Visitors' Guide 1930-1931. Located at Sarasota Historical Archives. Sarasota, Florida.

Seigerman Associates, Inc. "Sarasota County Historical Commission to Present Marker to Sarasota Theater of the Arts." Press Release issued April 15, 1983.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Site Size (Approx. Acreage of Property);

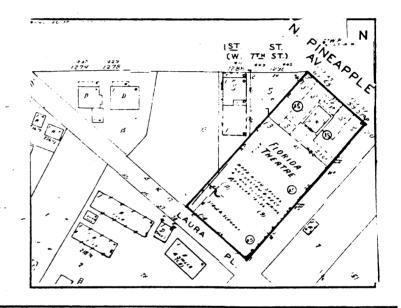
Less than l

**UTM Coordinates:** 

1 7 3 4 7 2 7 0 3 0 2 4 5 0 0 20NE EASTING NORTHING

USGS Sarasota 7.5 1973

_Township	Range	Section
Т365	R18E	19



#### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 7, 9 and 11 and a strip of land 2.6 ft. wide off Sely Side of Lot 13, Block B, Subdivision of Lots A & B. Plat of sarasota. Also in Or 1457/389.

LI	LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES				
STATE	N/A	CODE	COUNTY	CODE	
STATE	N/A	CODE	COUNTY	CODE	

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Sarah Latham Kearns / Preservation Consultant, City of Sarasota

organization c/o Planning Department	DATE TELEPHONE	
STREET & NUMBER City Hall P.O. Box 1058		
CITY OR TOWN	STATE	ZIP CODE
Sarasota	Florida.	33578

