

PHO 367842

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED NOV 21 1976

DATE ENTERED MAY 2 1977

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

The KiMo Theater

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

421 Central Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Albuquerque

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
#1

STATE

New Mexico

CODE

35

COUNTY

Bernalillo

CODE

001

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. Carlo Bachechi

STREET & NUMBER

1711 Dietz Place N.W.

CITY, TOWN

Albuquerque

VICINITY OF

STATE

New Mexico

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Bernalillo County Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Albuquerque

STATE

New Mexico

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties

DATE

July 30, 1976

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

State Planning Office

505 Don Gaspar

CITY, TOWN

Santa Fe

STATE

New Mexico 87503

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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 KiMo Theater, located on the northeast corner of Central Avenue and Fifth Street in the heart of downtown Albuquerque, is a steel frame and brick structure, three stories high with a fly loft five stories high. The exterior is finished with strongly textured light brown stucco with ornamental details of glazed terra cotta tile and relief work in vivid colors. Built in 1926-27 for both motion picture and stage productions, the auditorium has a proscenium stage and a seating capacity of 1300.

The south elevation, fronting on Central Avenue, is 75' wide with an overall height of 44'6". It has three levels, an entrance foyer flanked by retail space on either side and offices on levels two and three. A large marquee, added in the 1950's, now spans the width of the building replacing the original iron one which covered only the central entrance foyer and box office. It has not yet been determined whether or not the original tile work and wooden grills lie behind the present marquee. Originally a large vertical electric sign with name "KiMo" projected out from the building above the marquee, but this was removed in 1972. With the exception of window frame replacements, the rest of the south elevation frontispiece at levels two and three is intact with all its original tile work and relief ornament in place.

The west elevation, facing Fifth Street, is 142' long, 44'6" at the south end, stepping down to 40' and finally to 23' at the north end. Overall condition of this facade is excellent; the original tile work and ornament are intact. The only alteration has been to the retail shop facade at the southwest corner where originally the two recessed bays were windowed, with tile above and below. The windows were removed, filled in, plastered over and new incongruent tile was added. Facing onto a service alley the north elevation is 75' wide including a fly loft tower which is 60' high. The surface of this facade is exposed red brick, with large double stage doors, an emergency exit and access to the mechanical system. The bowstring roof over the auditorium is 46' high.

The entrance to the theater is through a vestibule which was remodeled in the 1950's. The original Indian symbols painted on the ceiling and vigas (beams) and the ornamental details of the corbels were removed at that time. The original murals have been overpainted with others. The lighting fixtures which represented the so-called "Farewell Canoe" were also lost. The "Canoe" was supposed to have carried a dead warrior and was towed by an eagle. Perimeter cove lighting has been added to the walls two feet below the ceiling.

The adjoining lobby is two floors high and is overlooked by an open mezzanine with stairways on either side. Large quadratura murals adorn the upper walls of the lobby, visible from the mezzanine. The murals, which depict the legendary "Seven Cities of Cibola," the cities of gold for which the first Spanish Conquistadores were searching, were painted by German-born artist Carl von Hassler, who died in 1969. Wrought iron railings on the stairs and mezzanine repeat the outline of a bird, an Indian symbol believed to signify Freedom. The railings were designed by Robert E. Powers of New York and fabricated by Gilbert Electric Company of Albuquerque, who also manufactured other hardware in the building. Carpeting in the vestibule,

(See Continuation Sheet Page 1)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED NOV 29 1976

DATE ENTERED MAY 2 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

the lobby, on the stairs and the mezzanine covers the original ceramic tile which was produced by the Denver Mantle and Tile Company. The large vigas in the lobby are detailed with vividly painted symbolic Indian designs. Between the vigas are oval zig-zag patterned lancunars from which chandeliers are hung. There are five square support columns detailed with plaster of Paris ornamentation topped by longhorn skull sconces.

The auditorium is almost square, 72' wide by 75' long, with seating for 850 in the orchestra and 450 in the balcony. Orchestra seating is arranged in three sections bordered by aisles. The balcony, divided by a large cross aisle, has an upper section of seven rows and a lower section of five rows. The auditorium ceiling is spanned by large vigas crossed by smaller ones. Alternate sections between the smaller vigas are coffered with the zig-zag Indian lightning symbol. Painted on the vigas are buffalo Yei figures of Navajo mythology - the sun, bird, swastika and lightning. The underside of the balcony has decorated vigas and between them are round zig-zag patterned lancunars similar to those in the lobby. The principal lighting fixtures which also represented the so-called "Farewell Canoe" were destroyed by fire in the late forties. The side walls are decorated with ornamental plaster of Paris bucranium reliefs, with longhorn skull sconces. An almost classical bucrane frieze with longhorn skulls and Indian symbols bordered the proscenium arch. The proscenium and the splay walls with wood grills which concealed the organ, were damaged by fire in 1962, and finally removed to accommodate a larger movie screen.

The symbol language of the Indian people is depicted in form as well as in the vivid color of the ornamental detail. The sun, bird and swastika, repeated throughout the theater, are symbols meaning happiness, freedom and good luck. Colors have symbolic significance varying with use. To symbolize direction, white is usually east, blue is south, yellow is west, and black is north. Blue is also the zenith and black and white spots the nadir. These designations differ on occasion. Usually the face of the sun is blue; that of the moon white. Abstract symbolism is also implied in certain colors, such as blue for peace and happiness, white for day, hope and beginning.

The orchestra pit at the front of the auditorium has been covered. A room beneath the stage contains mechanical equipment and provides access to the orchestra pit. By removing the proscenium, both stage wings were eliminated, and modifying the splay walls reduced the dressing room space. The fly loft has been closed with a dropped ceiling. The projection booth is located at the rear of the balcony and a door connects it to the third floor offices. A doorway links the mezzanine with the second floor offices. The second and third floor offices, some of which are occupied, comprise 3,596 square feet and are accessible from a Central Avenue entrance. The entire building contains approximately 22,534 gross square feet and in spite of numerous fires and other mishaps the theater is in good condition.

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 checked="" 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 Constructed 1926-27 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Robert E. McKee/Boller Brothe

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The movie palace represents a notable American architectural phenomenon, "some of the richest and most extravagantly romantic architecture this country has ever produced," in the words of Ada Louise Huxtable, architectural critic for the New York Times. The KiMo Theater, built in 1926-27 is a notable regional example of theater architecture which embodies architectural traditions of New Mexico and the art and culture of the American Indian of the Southwest.

At the turn of the century there was not one building devoted to cinematographic use in the country. By the 1920's movie madness was sweeping the world and the design of movie theaters became a unique specialty. Two schools of thought developed in theater design. The "atmospheric" school advocated the creation of a completely artificial environment, in the words of George Rapp, "a shrine to democracy where there are no privileged patrons. The "hard top" school used neo-classical forms. The design of the KiMo does not adhere strictly to either concept and the result is a romanticized regional style of architecture. In 1925 Oreste Bachechi, a prominent and successful member of the Italian community in Albuquerque and owner of the Pastime Theater, made plans to build a new movie palace. Bachechi went to Hollywood to find an architect for the new theater which he planned to build at the corner of Fifth and Central. He met Carl Boller, senior partner of Boller Brothers, AIA, whose brother Robert maintained an office in Kansas City. The firm had designed several theaters and they were considered "Theatrical Architects." When Boller first came to Albuquerque to inspect the site he thought the location was too far out of town, but with subsequent trips his enthusiasm for the project grew. He travelled all over New Mexico, visiting Indian pueblos and reservations, and gathering a wealth of design material. Pablo Abeita, well-known governor of the Pueblo of Isleta, and founder of the All-Pueblo Indian Council, suggested the name for the theater to Boller: KiMo, meaning "king of its kind."

After months of research Boller showed Bachechi a watercolor rendering of the interior concept proposed for the KiMo. This rendering is included in Ben M. Hall's The Remaining Seats. Longhorn skulls bordered the proscenium and were used elsewhere as light fixtures. Indian blankets took the place of the usual tapestries. The sun, bird and swastika, symbols meaning Life, Freedom and Happiness, were repeated throughout the theater. The Indian motifs and ceremonial masks used so extensively were painted in symbolic colors of the Southwest. The design was certainly appropriate for the locale

(See Continuation Sheet Page 2)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Albuquerque Journal, September 19, 1927.
 Bohme, T.G. "A History of the Italian American in New Mexico," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1958.
 Dunn, Dorothy. American Indian Painting of the Southwest and Plains Areas. Albuquerque, 1968.

(See Continuation Sheet Page 2)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approx. 1/4 acre.

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,3	34,9	4,0,0	3,8	8,3	5,2,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING				NORTHING
C							D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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 Sylvia Cook Architectural Historian, New Mexico State Planning Office
William G. Osofsky Albuquerque Historic Landmarks Survey

ORGANIZATION New Mexico State Records Center and Archives DATE November 22, 1976
 STREET & NUMBER 404 Montezuma TELEPHONE 505-827-2321
 CITY OR TOWN Santa Fe STATE New Mexico

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE X 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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE Thomas W. Merlan
 TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 11-24-76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER.

Attesting Chief Wm. J. ... DATE 5/2/77
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: Charles ... DATE 4-27-77
 Attesting KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	NOV 29 1976
DATE ENTERED	MAY 2 1977

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 & 9 PAGE 2

#8

Oreste Bachechi was very pleased with Boller's concept for the theater and the details of the building were then worked out. Boller contracted with George Williamson of Albuquerque to oversee construction as associate architect. The firm of Robert E. McKee was hired for the construction. In a little over a year, at a cost of \$150,000, including \$18,000 for the elaborate organ, the KiMo was completed.

The theater opened on September 19, 1927. Two thousand people jammed the theater. Albuquerque Mayor Clyde Tingley, who later became governor of New Mexico, U.S. Senator Sam G. Bratton, former Governor Arthur T. Hannett and Indian leaders from Tesuque, Cochiti and Isleta Pueblos and the Navajo Reservation attended the opening. The program featured sixty Indian dancers, Indian singers and a film, Patsy Ruth Miller and Glen Tyron in "Painting the Town."

The same year the KiMo opened, Warner Brothers introduced the "talkies." Acoustically, the theater presented no major problems and, with relatively few changes, the theater enjoyed a long and prosperous life. With the decline of downtown Albuquerque and changes in theater operations and audiences, the KiMo, like theaters all over the country, could no longer be operated profitably. It closed in 1968 but was later reopened once for a season of musical theater productions and again for a rock music concert in 1972.

The City of Albuquerque is now considering the purchase of the KiMo for restoration as a theater and as the nucleus of a center for the performing arts. It is a fine example of regional theater architecture which incorporates New Mexico's architectural and cultural heritage in its rich and elaborate ornamentation.

#9

Hall, Ben M., ed. The Best Remaining Seats. New York, 1961.
Interviews with Victor Bachechi, November-December, 1973.