

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

FILE  
COPY

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Movie Theaters in Washington State from 1900 to 1948

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Film Entertainment in Washington from 1900 to 1948

(Historic Contexts for future development)

Stage, Musical, and Oratory Entertainment in Washington from Early Settlement to 1915

Entertainment Entrepreneurs in Washington from 1850 to 1948

C. Geographical Data

The State of Washington

☐ See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Signature of certifying official

Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

State or Federal agency and bureau

August 20, 1991

Date

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

Date

---

## E. Statement of Historic Contexts

---

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

### ORGANIZATION OF MULTIPLE PROPERTY GROUP

The multiple property documentation form identifies one historic context--film entertainment in Washington--and several design and use related property types. The four property types are nickelodeons, combination houses, palaces, and conventional theaters. The context statement outlines general historic developments related to the theme. The discussions of the property types include a description of physical characteristics, an evaluation of significance, and a template of registration requirements for each property type. In addition, the form identifies two associated historic contexts and one property type for future development.

### INTRODUCTION

The history of film entertainment in Washington State parallels the invention and national distribution of film and projection equipment, production and distribution of motion pictures, and changing expectations of entertainment patrons. The design and construction of specific facilities to showcase the new entertainment medium evolved with the technology. Although a national phenomenon, the advent of movies resulted in a plethora of unique properties scattered across Washington as well as offered the general public a common link as witnesses to an extraordinary experience.

### BACKGROUND

The history of Washington is rich with evidence that former inhabitants entertained themselves in a variety of ways and built structures to house their favorite pastimes. At Old Man House in Suquamish, archaeologists discovered bone gaming pieces from a prehistoric mode of entertainment still practiced by native Americans. These artifacts as well as the later, historic Chenquoss Indian Race Track site in Skamania County, indicate that early inhabitants found time to shape objects and establish locations for their leisurely pursuits.

Permanent American settlement in Washington began in the years just prior to 1850 when the present boundary with British Columbia was established. Small communities in western Washington developed around lumber mills or fishing operations. The communities of central and eastern Washington developing as trading centers for the agricultural regions or as supply centers for the Northwest mining industry, were widely scattered and economically isolated.

Prior to the arrival of transcontinental rail lines in the 1880s entertainment, other than homegrown, reached these communities overland and by the principal water routes. Olympia and Walla Walla served as theatrical hubs for the rough circuits linking communities with entertainers.<sup>1</sup> Individuals passing through the territory, exchanging readings, gossip, and music for meals were among the first performers.

Communities provided space in a variety of structures for the entertainers. Mill mess-halls and second floor storage areas typify spaces which doubled as theaters when performers came to town. Structures large enough to handle gatherings of any size sufficed. Often the theater portion of the building was not visible from the exterior of the property and consisted of little more than a large rectangular space with

---

<sup>1</sup>Eugene Clinton Elliott, A History of Variety-Vaudeville in Seattle From the Beginning to 1914 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1944), p. 48.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number E Page 2

folding chairs for the audience. "In Port Townsend, the public auditorium was the Masonic Hall, built in 1855; in Olympia, it was the dining room of the Washington Hotel."<sup>2</sup> Bare board public meeting halls, such as the one erected by Yesler in Seattle in 1861 boasted little glamour. Lacking a curtain or scenery, lighted by candles and fish-oil lamps behind upright tin reflectors, they also served as theaters on occasion.

As stage productions gained in popularity and the frequency of the performances increased, theaters and performance halls became buildings in their own right. "Squire's Opera House, the first building in Seattle to be built for use exclusively as a theater, was erected in 1879."<sup>3</sup>

The railroad served as a unifying force for the region and a stimulus to growth. It also provided entertainers with greater mobility and the local circuits as well as national circuits expanded their territory. As major transportation routes changed, theatrical centers shifted to Spokane and Seattle.<sup>4</sup> The boom of settlement stimulated by the railroads included construction of theaters, opera houses, and the like in communities served by the routes.

By the turn of the century, the troupes of traveling acts roaming the nation had evolved into a business with a well established circuit. Vaudeville was a grand and expensive production involving a number of players, musicians, stage hands, electricians, and management personnel. The circuit supported the enterprise and assured the performers of their audience. Established by a theatrical combine formed in 1896 among individuals controlling theaters from New York to San Francisco, the circuit routed vaudeville troupes from theater to theater throughout the country.

In Washington, the development of the national circuit spawned local circuits and entrepreneurs. John Cort became one of a number of enterprising men in the Northwest to advance the business of entertainment management. Located in Seattle, Cort purchased theater leases in towns along the Northern Pacific Railroad and eventually became the Northwest representative of the vaudeville syndicate. He also "organized the Northwestern Theatrical Association which, in 1903, controlled thirty-seven houses."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 46.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number E Page 3

---

Mirroring the successful tack of the vaudeville syndicate, Northwest independents developed local circuits and brought major entertainment to the doorsteps of many isolated populations. Construction of theaters in these communities coincided with the increased access for entertainers.

Circuits influenced construction of theaters across Washington and provided a proving ground for the business of theater management. Circuits, the men behind them, and the talent they showcased contributed to the perception that entertainment--that is, professional performances--were an integral part of the social fabric of most Washington communities.

Similar appetites for entertaining spectacles and dramas developed in communities across the nation. When technology birthed the mechanism for projecting images in motion, a ready market existed to sample its wares.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: FILM ENTERTAINMENT IN WASHINGTON STATE FROM 1900-1948

### Significance: Historic trends and patterns of growth

Film entertainment in Washington from 1900 to 1948 represented a significant social aspect of community life. Movies played to the masses. They united citizens with a common experience cutting through social, economic, and political barriers to deliver entertainment. Movie theaters showcased the medium. Often located in the historic downtown core, the visually prominent structures served as focal points for cultural events, gathering places for nightlife, and social centers for the communities.

Movie theaters in Washington evidence the historic trends and patterns of growth of film entertainment in the state. Development in film entertainment both nationally and in Washington is marked by major stages of growth; pivotal events; principal dates, persons, events, activities, and forces; and the cultural and environmental influences of transportation, commerce, industry, technology, communication, climate, and natural resources.

### Major stages of growth:

The primary stage of growth in film entertainment in America and in Washington commenced with the public exhibition of the moving picture. During this phase the medium was viewed as a novelty by most of the nation. However, it included significant advances in the production and distribution of moving pictures, innovations in projection devices and film technology, and exploration of environments in which to exhibit the entertainment.

A subsequent stage of growth is marked by the construction of facilities specifically for film entertainment. No longer regarded as a novelty, several waves of construction occurred within this stage of growth.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number E Page 4

influenced by the increasing economic importance of film entertainment and public demand. Four property types distinguish the construction phases within this period: nickelodeons, combination houses, palaces, and conventional theaters. In Washington, theaters within each of the property types were constructed. Further, the facility construction phase is marked by a significant number of theaters inspired, designed, and executed by nationally acclaimed entrepreneurs, architects, and artisans.

The third major stage of growth represents an on-going period of threat to the resources that historically symbolize the significance of film entertainment. The attrition rate of irreplaceable resources serves to stimulate reassessment of these theaters. This phase includes the development of competitive forms of entertainment, increasing technological sophistication of consumers, compelling economic factors influencing impacts to resources, adaptive reuse, and compromise of extant resources or demolition. This period is further distinguished by the rise in efforts to preserve significant theaters for their value in symbolizing a sense of community, history, and place.

The stage of threat in Washington shares similarities with the national trends. Distinction is due to the number of significant theaters which remain, a delay until recently in the development pressures experienced by other states, and a significant grassroots effort to retain and redevelop the resources.

## Pivotal events:

Pivotal events in America from the early 1900s to the late 1960s significantly impacted film entertainment and its most tangible symbol, movie theaters. The invention of projection devices and the swift pace of subsequent innovations influenced the degree and direction of the majority of aspects associated with film entertainment. The demise of vaudeville and its gradual retirement over a period of time, stimulated the film industry as a replacement entertainment.

World War I, its cause and effects, contributed to an upheaval in perceptions for Americans. Socialism, isolationism, capitalism all found expression in film entertainment--a communication medium which reached the masses. The environment for that medium, theaters, accommodated the influences and public demands through architecture.

The Great Depression effected the economics and social value of film entertainment. Limited construction and design dollars resulted in the end of the era of grand movie palace construction. Movies and theaters offered the public an escape from the difficulties of the time.

World War II further stimulated the value of film entertainment for communication with the masses. Again, as an information medium, film promoted social and political awareness which was often reflected in theater designs of the era.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number E Page 5

Several post-war events significantly contributed to the diminishing importance of film entertainment and a reduction of substantial investments for theater construction. The anti-trust actions of 1948, the advent of television, and the relocation of middle class Americans to the suburbs taxed the industry. Television challenged movies for audience appeal. Audiences for the prominent downtown theaters relocated. Economic considerations for the construction of neighborhood and later shopping mall theaters reduced designs to purely functional facilities.

## Principal dates, persons, and development forces:

Numerous events and the personalities and development forces associated with them influenced the evolution of film entertainment across the nation and the significance of the industry within Washington. Nationally, acknowledged benchmarks in the area of film technology from the late 1800s on contributed to the opportunities to promote movies as viable entertainment. Key inventions and innovations include: perfect frame-lined celluloid film, the standardization of projection speed and film width, mass market projection devices, feature-length motion pictures, sound films, color films, cinemascope, and 3-D.

Events in the area of theater management and design evidence changes within film entertainment which eventually impacted the industry and its resources in Washington. In theater management, efforts promoted the economic health of the industry. Among the principal events are: the development of movie chains and the studio systems from the 1920s until the anti-trust actions in 1948, the increase of theater commissions through 1928, the promotion of Art Deco style for theaters in the 1930s, development of neighborhood theaters in the 1940s, the redirection of investment toward film innovations in the 1950s, and the stacking and later multi-plexing of theaters through the 1960s.

Innumerable factors contributed to the advancement of movie theater design across the nation. Significant events include: deluxe theaters in 1913, the first palace theaters in 1915, charted traffic patterns for patrons in 1921, interest in architecture from ancient and exotic lands in 1922, the unveiling of John Eberson's atmospheric style in 1923, Grauman's Chinese Theater impacts the nation in 1927, the unequalled grand design of New York's Roxy Theater opened in 1927, and the opening in 1932 of Radio City Music Hall, the largest movie theater ever built.

Local and national personalities in the fields of theater management, art, architecture, and technology contributed to the development of film entertainment in Washington. Among the numerous individuals prominent in theater management, were John Cort, John Considine, Alexander Pantages, Frederick Mercy, James Q. Clemmer, John Danz, E. A. Zabel, Eugene Levy, Henry T. Moore, Edward Dolan, and O. T. Taylor. Architects and artisans of local and national significance contributed to the design and construction techniques applied to Washington's movie theaters. Included among the notable individuals from the field are: Robert C. Reamer, Joseph Wohleb, B. Marcus Priteca, Edwin W. Houghton, Henry Osterman, Bjarne Moe, William Aitken, George B. Purvis, Henry Bittman, Sherwood A. Ford, Charles

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number E Page 6

Herbert Bebb, F. J. Peters, Roland E. Borhek, Edwin St. John Griffin, Gustav Liljestrom, and B. F. Scheer.

### Cultural and environmental influences:

The social, economic, and political climates in America from the early 1900s to the late 1960s and key events in those arenas strongly influenced the development of film entertainment. Although national events impacted the growth of the industry in most states equally, subtle distinctions are discernable in Washington.

In Washington, film entertainment was influenced by transportation, commerce, industry, communication, climate, geography, and access to natural resources. Historically, transportation routes linking Washington's scattered settlements established a favorable environment statewide for the development of theatrical entertainment circuits. When the entertainment medium shifted from live to film, theaters built in communities located along major transportation routes continued to serve as focal points for the business of entertainment.

As with many communities across the nation, the theaters served as local gathering spots for the dispersement of information as well as entertainment. Geography and climate complicated communication among Washington communities which film entertainment helped remedy with its valued newsreel service. Abundant natural resources for construction use, water transport, and settlement appeal further promoted a nurturing environment in which film entertainment could thrive. The boom period of the nation and the industry mixed well with the frontier nature of most Washingtonians. Numerous ventures and careers were launched through the business of exhibiting movies. Names of the successful and properties associated to that success rank among the nation as significant.

### Significance: Architecture

The significance of film entertainment to the social fabric of America as a whole and Washington specifically from 1900 to 1948 revolved around the nature of the medium. Movies communicated. Theaters which showcased the medium enhanced the receptiveness of the audience. And, style transformed theaters into unique environments which expanded the sphere of entertainment beyond the world of fantasy flashed upon a screen.

Film entertainment offered creativity and imagination an opportunity for full expression. Architecture responded in kind. Theaters--spacious and opulent, exotic and mysterious, fanciful and vibrant--emerged from the dreams of entrepreneurs, architects, and artisans. And, across the nation, the season for film entertainment matured into a marriage between art and amusement with the theater as its worthy champion.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number E Page 7

---

Movie theaters in Washington evidence the architecture uniquely associated to film entertainment in the state. The principal types, styles, time periods, and methods of construction of Washington's historic theaters and their principal architects, builders, entrepreneurs, and artisans illustrate film entertainment. The architectural characteristics of Washington's historic theaters, their aesthetic qualities, scale, proportions, materials, stylistic details, spacial arrangements, and construction techniques illustrate the impact of film entertainment on the overall architectural character of Washington from 1900 to 1948. The development of the style, type, and character of movie theater architecture is marked by cultural and environmental influences: commerce, industry, technology, and communication, climate, and natural resources.

The advent of film altered the types of entertainment offered within existing theaters and prompted shifts in design to coincide with the change in audience demands. Predecessors of the first film theaters were the variety-vaudeville. These structures housed lively entertainments and frequently access to saloons and ample libations. Viewed initially as a novelty, the early movies served as breaks between the live acts and heralded intermissions. As film quality and quantity improved, audience interest swelled. Theater lights dimmed and quelled the secondary activities of drinking and socializing during performances. Eventually movies gained a following separate from live performances. Separate theaters were setup in storefronts and movies played to audiences repeatedly throughout the day, seven days a week. Rapid advances in projection and audio equipment outpaced the production of movies and for a time the storefront theaters called upon live acts to supplement the bill of fare. The demise of vaudeville stimulated the movie business and its following. Movies became more than interesting images cavorting on screens; stories evolved--melodramas, epics, and adventures. Permanent and synchronized audio accompaniment emerged in 1927 with sound films. And, simultaneous with this growth in the industry was the evolution in design and architecture of facilities showcasing its product, the theaters.

## Principal types:

The principal types of movie theaters are nickelodeons, combination houses, palaces, and conventional theaters. Theaters built for film entertainment principally house the equipment necessary to project movies and accommodate audiences. The initial projection equipment used to exhibit moving pictures required very little in the way of space, design, acoustics and the like to successfully present the entertainment to the public. Technological innovations in production and exhibition of films increased the complexity of presentation. Qualities desirable for theater environments also expanded. Architects and entrepreneurs associated with variety-vaudeville construction and management applied their energies to the new and booming industry. And eventually, distinct theater types emerged out of the innovative responses to the evolving exhibition needs.

Nickelodeons 1905-1910: Recognized as the first movie theaters, nickelodeons encompass the storefront conversions, second floor walk-ups, and structures built expressly for early film exhibition.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number E Page 8

---

Combination houses 1905-1915: Once film entertainment passed through its novelty stage and radio offered the vaudevillians a new outlet for their entertainment, the dominant use of theaters shifted to movies. Movie theater design during this era frequently reflected the transition between live and film with emphasis on screening celluloid. Three principal theater types co-exist: vaudeville theaters, movie theaters, and movie-vaudeville theaters.

Palaces and Palace-era theaters 1915-1936: Theaters built during the palace era represent the zenith of movie theater design. Scale and style distinguish numerous sub-types between the categories of traditional and non-traditional decorative concepts.

Conventional theaters 1935-1948: The post-palace-era theaters, constructed with economy and function in mind include the ideal or streamlined theaters and neighborhood theaters.

### Principal styles:

The immediate predecessors of the first movie theaters were the variety-vaudeville houses built at the turn of the century. Design of these structures and the movie theaters as well originated from innumerable performance arenas of the past. Characteristics from ancient amphitheaters, royal residences, religious structures, and European and American opera houses and performance halls offered architects and builders of theaters a rich source of inspiration.

Pre-film structures significant to the design of movie theaters include among their numbers the 1889 Auditorium Building, the 1891 Academy of Music, and the 1903 New Amsterdam Theatre. The Auditorium Building in Chicago by Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan established by example innovations in function, construction techniques, acoustics, lighting, mechanical and ventilation systems, and performance devices. Its function represented the theater as part of a complex of facilities, a design aspect used repeatedly and later developed to the extreme with New York's Rockefeller Center which includes Radio City Music Hall. The Academy of Music in Northhampton, Massachusetts by William Brocklesby employed the technique of exterior massing to distinguish functions within. The New Amsterdam Theatre in New York illustrated the adherence to and application of one pure style throughout the design of the structure.

### Traditional styles:

Distinctive styles applied to movie theater design fall into one of two categories, traditional and non-traditional decorative concepts. Styles frequently employed for movie theaters which fall into the traditional decorative concept category include: Beaux-Arts, Adamesque, Neoclassical, Gothic, and Spanish Colonial. Traditional decorative concepts represent the treatments derived from a familiar and classically oriented style. Many of the nickelodeons exhibited elements of a traditional style often due

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number E Page 9

---

to the availability of pre-fabricated cast iron facades. Construction of combination houses involved architects and entrepreneurs who selected characteristics from among old world styles for embellishment. A shift occurred with the period of palace construction to the use of styles as more than mere topical enhancements. Innovations in film-making and a significant public response contributed to the optimism about the industry by owners, builders, and studios. Scale and elaboration of design increased. And, entrepreneurs pursued and realized a dream to showcase film entertainment in a grand environment and enrich their patrons experience. Extreme examples of the traditional decorative concept involved replicating old world structural environments themselves including in some cases the trappings, artwork, and rooms from the original.

## Non-traditional styles:

Non-traditional design concepts applied to movie theaters include Atmospherics and Exotics and a myriad of sub-types, and the Art Nouveau and Art Deco styles. At the time the first movie theaters were built architecture had embraced the new and expressive nature-oriented Art Nouveau style. Application of the fluid and fanciful characteristics to theaters were advantageous to the enterprise, contributing to the promise of similar entertainments within and attracting clientele. Further developments of non-traditional decorative concepts for movie theaters evolved from the combined impact of the 1922 unearthing of King Tut's tomb, construction of John Eberson's first atmospheric theater in 1923, and a mounting weariness with the familiar old world styles. The non-traditional styles mirrored the unrestrained exuberance of the 1920s and the fascination with the mysteries of exotic and ancient cultures. Aptly named atmospherics and exotics, these styles tantalized audiences, heightened their senses, and enhanced their movie-going experience. In their purest form, they created or replicated settings with active dimensions, involving patrons as witnesses to events.

Economies shifted as the styles within traditional and non-traditional reached their fullest expression. Excessive ornamentation contributed to the costs and prompted the use of a streamlined style. Art Deco, inspired by nature and expressed in geometric form, offered an interesting and unexpected environment for films. Given economic parameters, designers met the challenge of providing the sensation of atmosphere with creative lighting devices.

Stylistic treatments for movie theaters become less distinct as the frequency of Art Deco designs declined. Scale and plan decreased. New construction and later remodelling efforts continue to convey unique environments but without the grandeur or excess. Though it remained a significant symbol for the industry, the movie theater lacked the qualities that made it an art form in itself.

## ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number E Page 10

---

Included with the four distinct property types of nickelodeon, combination houses, palaces, and conventional theaters is a general description, significance, and registration requirements for all historic movie theaters in Washington. Related to the movie theater property type is the outdoor theater which includes as a sub-type drive-in movie theaters. Context and property types for outdoor theaters will be developed in the future.

---

## F. Associated Property Types

---

### I. Name of Property Type Movie Theaters

### II. Description

The movie theater is a building type associated with the expansion of film entertainment after the turn of the century and reflects the cultural development of the community in which theaters are located. Typically, movie theaters are visually prominent structures, centrally located in commercial cores. Construction of theaters exclusively for film in Washington occurs after 1905. Frequently, Washington theaters exhibit numerous styles applied over a period of time and represent rehabilitation stages which coincide with innovations in film technology.

### III. Significance

Movie theaters evidence the significance of film entertainment in Washington communities. Prior to the advent of television, theaters presented the major source of entertainment. They represented gathering places within communities that ignored social, economic, and political differences. Across the nation they served as the focal point for nightlife and offered the public a place to experience luxury and suspend reality for the price of a ticket. In Washington, film entertainment and its theaters played a significant role in communication, linking the most isolated communities with the most accessible and contributing to public awareness. Theater architecture often represents a significant example of style interpreted within a local, state, or national context. Personalities associated with theater design and management similarly represent individuals with local, state, or national significance. Almost without exception, movie theaters in Washington convey with their visual distinction a sense of community, history, and place.

### IV. Registration Requirements

To be eligible for listing in the National Register, a movie theater must convey its historic character in both physical and associative ways and must have documented historical significance when evaluated within the context of film entertainment history.

Given the distinctive form of the movie theater and each of the four property types eligible theaters must retain integrity of its location, setting, scale, massing, exterior cladding and trim, and any fenestration in order to convey their historic character. Many character defining elements--visually prominent facade, projecting marquee, and exterior lighting treatment--are integral to the theater's function and eligible properties will retain those features. Alterations must be carefully evaluated to determine the impact to the significant character of the structure. Additions or alterations to the exterior completed during the period of significance may reflect the evolution of film technology, advances in marketing and exhibition of movies and should be evaluated within that context.

Eligible theaters must retain interior integrity also. Character defining features include original floor plan (lobby, auditorium, projection booth), flooring and wall materials, seating and light fixtures, proscenium, stage, screens and backdrops, curtains, projection booth, mechanical equipment (projection, heating, ventilation, lighting, sound accompaniment, stage, intercom,), ornamentation, wall and ceiling decorative treatment, and pipe organ. Retention of those features is desirable in eligible properties. The lobby,

---

☒ See continuation sheet

☒ See continuation sheet for additional property types

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number F Page 2

auditorium, and projection booth are central to the character of theaters. Eligible theaters must retain auditorium integrity. Alterations to the lobby, projection booth, and other character defining features must be carefully evaluated to determine the impact to the significant character of the structure. Additions or alterations to the interior completed during the period of significance may reflect the evolution of film entertainment and should be evaluated within that context.

Moved properties will not be eligible except under extraordinary circumstances when the theater is of unusual historical value and where the new location is compatible with the historic setting.

Theaters less than fifty years old will not normally be considered eligible for listing unless extraordinary historical significance justify inclusion.

I. Name of Property Type Nickelodeons 1905-1910

## II. Description

The construction of movie theaters reflected the general development of film entertainment in Washington. Film entertainment, a national novelty from its inception, was introduced into most communities through the variety-vaudeville establishments. The earliest movie theaters were converted storefronts or second floor walk-ups, until the popularity of the entertainment form warranted the larger more permanent structures.

The first permanent movie theaters were not elaborate and seated less than 200 in most cases. Often built by local contractors with materials at hand, they characterized by their simplicity of form and expediency of construction, the prototypical movie theater of the early 1900s. Their single-story rectangular frame, stone, or brick structure with gabled or boomtown roof fronted high traffic streets and abutted adjacent properties. Typically, a decorated pre-cast metal facade--often ordered from catalogs--with recessed entryway and projecting ticketbooth concealed their simple structure. Art Nouveau stylings were sometimes evident. Lighting which outlined the structure or highlighted the facade was extremely common. Their interiors were purely functional, flat-floor, singular spaces with a screen affixed to the wall at one end and a projection booth above the entryway at the opposite. Sometimes a shallow stage protruded beneath the screen. Occasionally balconies on either side of the projection booth or simple opera boxes on the side walls near the screen were included. Fixed seating was rare.

## III. Significance

The nickelodeon is closely associated to the development of film entertainment in Washington from the 1905-1910. The first structure built to exclusively exhibit moving pictures, the nickelodeon served to test and promote the entertainment form. Limited seating capacities for Nickelodeons were significant to the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number F Page 3

economical manner in which the early films were marketed. Seating, usually 200 and more, distinguished the establishment as a theater rather than an amusement and required a costlier license. Owners frequently chose to meet the criteria as an amusement and compensated their reduced income by providing in some cases up to "18 performances a day, seven days a week."<sup>6</sup> The simplicity of design and operation of the theaters contributed to the statewide boom in their construction and exposed the medium to a vast number of consumers.

In addition to its vital role in promoting film entertainment, the nickelodeon with its flashy exterior and functional interior explored theater design. The curious and distinctive facades promised entertainment and attracted customers. The location on a major street, the recessed entry, and the use of lighting to highlight the structure continued to be successful draws for the business when applied to later theater types. Chiefly, the size of nickelodeons limited their continued use as theaters as popularity for the medium continued. Nickelodeons that survived successfully expanded their small rectangular spaces to accommodate larger audiences, additional projection and exhibition equipment, and more elaborate interior ornamentation. No longer providing the entertainment associated exclusively with nickelodeons, the theaters evolved beyond that classification. Nickelodeons unable to continue as theaters in any capacity were lost or adapted to a new enterprise, their simple character defining features absorbed into, masked, or obliterated by the design for their subsequent use.

#### IV. Registration Requirements

To be eligible for listing in the National Register, a nickelodeon must meet the general movie theater registration requirements to the extent they are applicable to the simple form of Washington's earliest movie theaters. Exterior nickelodeon character defining elements are recessed entry, prominent facade, and stylistic treatments.

Ideally, eligible nickelodeons must also retain interior integrity. Character defining features include original floor plan, flooring and wall materials, trim, projection booth, balcony, screen, seating, and projection and sound accompaniment equipment.

Survey data indicates that the survival rate of these short-lived theaters is not high. Of those remaining, data further indicates all have been altered. Features which convey a property's use as a nickelodeon must be evaluated against alterations and additions and must be carefully considered under the extraordinary circumstances that the nickelodeon is of an unusual historical value.

---

<sup>6</sup> Q. David Bowers, Nickelodeon Theaters and Their Music (New York: Vestal Press, 1986), p. 43.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number F Page 4

I. Name of Property Type Combination Houses 1905-1915

## II. Description

The popularity of film entertainment increased and as vaudeville declined the design and construction of movie theaters received more attention from professional theater managers, owners, and architects. Predominately throughout the state, architects from the community designed the facilities along the lines of the vaudeville houses. Seating capacities generally exceeded in excess of 300. Larger and more elaborate than their predecessor, the stone, brick, or concrete structure with flat or vaulted roof maintained siting along a prominent commercial avenue frequently abutting other commercial structures.

The facade sheathed in fire resistant materials rose above the one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half story structure. Above the recessed entry was a projecting marquee. The increased application of style and decorative treatments distinguished them from the earlier theater type. Frequently brick, stone, or terra cotta were used as sheathing and reflected the planned decorative design. Embellishments often produced by local craftsmen or major suppliers included stained glass, cast iron, statuary, or manipulated terra cotta, and lighting.

The interior rectangular plan was divided into the principal spaces of lobby, projection booth, and auditorium. Within the auditorium floors were sloped and seating fixed. Frequently, one or two balconies and a stage (for second billed live acts) were provided. Decorative embellishments throughout the interior included stenciling, plasterwork, carved beams, draperies, shaped wooden seats with ornamental cast iron standards, carpet runners in the aisles, and ornate lighting fixtures. Musical instruments and sound accompaniment devices were part of the entertainment equipment. A larger projection booth with fireproofing accommodated additional equipment for sequencing films, lighting, and sound accompaniment.

Other spaces within the theater housed heating and ventilation systems and sometimes management offices and lodgings. Rarely were other commercial spaces included in design of Washington's pre-palace era theaters.

## III. Significance

The combination house is significant to film entertainment in Washington as a movie theater design which reflected the transition between live and film with emphasis on screening celluloid. The involvement of persons principal to vaudeville with the construction and management of movie theaters is a significant aspect to the health of the industry. The resulting operation of the combination houses applied successful strategies to a related form, capitalized on the popularity of film, and gradually converted audiences over to the new medium.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number F Page 5

The combination house also represented with its more spacious and comfortable environment the trend to cater to the patrons, to deliver more of what the flashy nickelodeon facade had promised but failed to deliver in quality. The theaters offered notable architects and artisans an opportunity to apply their talents and new personalities to gain experience.

## IV. Registration Requirements

To be eligible for listing in the National Register, a combination house must meet the general movie theater registration requirements and strongly convey its historical character in physical and associative ways. In addition it must have documented historical significance when evaluated within the context of film entertainment history.

The form of the combination house type is distinctive. Eligible theaters must retain integrity of scale, massing, and exterior cladding and trim in order to convey their historic character. Many character defining elements--prominent facade, projecting marquee, recessed entryway, and ticket booth--are integral to the theater's function and eligible properties will retain those features. Alterations must be carefully evaluated to determine the impact to the significant character of the structure. Additions or alterations to the interior of the theater completed during the period of significance may reflect the evolution of film entertainment and should be evaluated within that context.

Location and setting are central to the visually prominent movie theaters. Moved properties will not be eligible.

Eligible theaters must retain interior integrity. Character defining features include original floor plan (lobby, auditorium, projection booth), flooring and wall materials, seating and light fixtures, proscenium, stage, screens and backdrops, curtains, projection booth, mechanical equipment (projection, heating, ventilation, lighting, sound accompaniment, stage, intercom,), ornamentation, wall and ceiling decorative treatment, and pipe organ. Retention of those features is desirable in eligible properties. The lobby, auditorium, and projection booth are central to the character of the combination house. Eligible theaters must retain auditorium integrity. Alterations to the lobby, projection booth, and other character defining features must be carefully evaluated to determine the impact to the significant character of the structure. Additions or alterations to the theater completed during the period of significance may reflect the evolution of film entertainment and should be evaluated within that context.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number F Page 6

I. Name of Property Type Palaces and Palace-era Theaters 1915-1936:

II. Description

Construction of palaces and palace-era theaters reflected the general trend to exhibit film entertainment in a luxurious environment. Nationally, the peak construction years were from 1925 to 1930, but throughout the era palaces symbolized the zenith in decorative design for movie theaters which challenged the cathedrals, royal palaces, and opera houses from which they were derived--designs which competed with and eclipsed in some cases the films they showcased. Within Washington, the palaces represent the zenith of theater design which occurred across the state. The largest urban areas constructed the largest and most elaborate palaces. Scale and plan increased significantly from the combination houses. Frequently, seating capacities exceeded 1,000 and floor to ceiling height within the auditorium ranged between three and five stories.

Construction of the major structures involved significant architects and artisans, entrepreneurs, and movie chain and studio system managers. Architectural firms of national acclaim for theater design were commissioned for principal projects in the larger urban areas of the state. In smaller jurisdictions, the projects similarly impacted the economy and palace designs modified to the locale and population were executed by notable architects or from their plans.

The palaces represented a shift in the design treatment of the theater as a whole--interior and exterior. Still a prominent structure along principal thoroughfares, the increased scale of the palace resulted in it dominating large blocks of property amid the central commercial cores.

The plan of the palace varied. Constructed principally as a commercial complex of which a grand theater was a part, the palace included within its plan rentable, habitable space. Occasionally, the space was commercial retail and occupied the first floor area on either side of the main entrance. More frequently, the complex abutted, surrounded, or encased the theater with offices, apartments, or large commercial establishments unifying the whole with a cohesive design of a notable style or mix of styles.

The plan of the theater itself was typically a rectangular steel and reinforced concrete structure with a vaulted, gabled, sawtooth, or monitor roof when not topped by other facilities within the complex. Frequently the facade dominated the complex and the surrounding commercial core in which it was located. The marquee was significant in contributing to the prominence of the theater, especially when the bulk of the theater is encased within a commercial facility.

The interior of the theater was patron oriented. Divided into innumerable spaces, the public areas were arranged with thought to traffic patterns--controlling the movement of customers through the glamorous environment. Most often, the entryway was a large recessed space with a prominent ticketbooth. The

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number F Page 7

lobby was usually generous with a focal point such as a grand staircase or ramped walkways. An inner foyer of varying size often separated the main lobby from the auditorium. The auditorium could be wide and shallow or deep and narrow. Stadium seating with access on either side at the mid-point or rear access with one or two balconies was possible. The screen was framed within a proscenium with a stage beneath and the large room or rooms housing the projection equipment was located at the rear of the balcony or stadium seating. Other spaces common to palaces include, generous lounges, management offices, backstage mechanical spaces and dressing rooms, a subterranean level for heating and ventilation equipment, a catwalk area above the ceiling to access lighting, and on either side of the proscenium recessed or alcoved areas for organ pipes.

The style or mix of styles was applied to the total design of the theater to create a unique environment. The traditional or non-traditional style or styles of the palaces is the dominant character defining feature which conveys the environment. Sometimes the degree of application was varied throughout the public spaces to provide a gradual visual progression from the outside world to the fantasy world within. The reverse was also possible with extravagance on the exterior gradually decreasing through the lobby and foyer to a less detailed auditorium--a gradual reduction in distractions and increased emphasis on the screened or staged entertainment. Either manner or a variation of both contributed to the overall success of the palaces in heightening and enhancing patrons' visual and entertainment experiences. Other features common to the environment that a palace created were the theater staff to usher the patrons to seating, rich appointments, padded and generous seating, an organ, lighting fixtures and its use as a design element, ornamentation, and the display of artwork or examples of fine craftsmanship.

Palace-era theaters reflect design and construction features distinct from the earlier combination houses and later conventional theaters. The events, advancements in technology, and increasing popularity of entertainment that resulted in palace designs influenced to a degree all theater construction during the era. Palace-era theaters exhibit palace-like features but due to scale, spartan application of design treatments, or quality of workmanship fail to meet the perception of palace and therefore fail to justify palace classification.

In Washington, palace-era theaters often represent properties erected without the assistance of major state or national investors or consultation with notable architects. Excesses associated with palaces were moderated however the essential qualities were employed: theater as part of a commercial complex, design treatment of the theater as a whole--interior and exterior, prominent facades or marquees, and style or mix of styles applied to the design to provide a unique environment.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number F Page 8

---

## III. Significance

Palaces are associated with film entertainment as the zenith of movie theater design. They symbolize the post-war age of optimism and increasing affluence. And, they served as an expression of entertainment itself elevated beyond the status as a transitory or seasonal amusement to the pinnacle of recognition across the nation. They are spectacles in their own right. They were built to express the romantic extremes of architectural design and built to serve a purpose purely economic in nature--to draw patrons to the box office.<sup>7</sup>

The design and ornamentation of a palace often represents the most significant example of its architect's and artisan's work. It also often served as the most costly enterprise for the associated entrepreneurs' careers and the most sophisticated and technologically challenging project in the history of the construction firms--who assumed with the contracts the responsibility to realize the dreams of many. Related to the palace is a parallel history of entertainers and theater managers that attained fame through association with the structure.

The style or styles of architecture of the palace are also significant. First, they are significant as examples of style(s) derived from either traditional or non-traditional foundations. Second, if based on classical origins the characteristic features of the style(s) applied to palace construction were often executed at full scale--sometimes even larger. These features used in combination with other illusionary devices successfully replicated the visual impact of the historical originals. And, third, if developed from non-traditional origins, the characteristic features of the style(s) when applied to palaces represented in most cases the premier example of the style(s)--unrestrained imagination, the fullest expression allowable within the generous budgets.

Although not representative as the zenith of movie theater design--except perhaps within their setting--the palace-era theaters are significant because they also symbolize post-war attitudes. The more modest palace-era theaters represent controlled optimism and limited affluence also present during the pre-depression years. In addition, much that is significant about palaces is equally significant to the palace-era theaters when viewing the impact of their construction on the community. They were built to stimulate patronage. And, when compared with theaters in the community constructed before and after, they clearly represent the momentary shift in theater design--treating the theater as the whole, interior and exterior.

## IV. Registration Requirements

---

<sup>7</sup>David Naylor, American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy, (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1981), p. 32.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number F Page 9

To be eligible for listing in the National Register, a palace must meet the general registration requirements for movie theaters. The form of a palace, both interior and exterior, is distinctive and central to its integrity. The plan, the theater as part of commercial complex which includes rentable habitable space must be evident in eligible theaters. The exterior of eligible theaters must retain visual association to the complex aspect and character defining features of the interior are the application of a distinct style or mix of styles. They must also retain integrity of scale, massing, and exterior cladding and trim in order to convey their historic character. Character defining elements which identify main entrances such as prominent facades, projecting marquees, ticket booths, recessed entryways, and decorative lighting treatments are integral to identifying the theater's function within the complex and conveying the progression of style throughout. Eligible properties will retain those exterior characteristics.

Additions or alterations to the complex or theater completed during the period of significance may reflect the evolution of film entertainment and should be evaluated within that context with careful consideration to the characteristics which convey the distinct palace-type classification. Alterations outside the period of significance must be carefully evaluated to determine the impact to the significant character of the theater. Exceptions to the requirements of exterior integrity may be considered when the theater is part of a large commercial complex and as originally designed had limited exterior reference to its function within. Properties considered for exception must retain integrity of the interior character defining features including lobby, projection booth, and auditorium.

Location and setting are central to the visually prominent palaces. Moved properties will not be eligible. Exceptions may be considered due to the extraordinary nature of palaces within the history of film entertainment and their architectural significance and when the integrity of all other character defining features have been retained. In addition, eligible theaters within the palace type must retain interior integrity. Character defining features of a distinct style or mix of styles including artwork, lounge and lobby appointments, visual effects (atmospheric lighting, colored steam), usher station spotlights and communication systems, theater management communication and operation equipment, technological innovations (projection, exhibition, acoustical, and mechanical systems), backdrops, and specialized seating (Rockefeller loges). Included among the character defining features is the interior plan--the arrangement of space within the theater--which represents the design for traffic. Retention of character defining features is desirable in eligible properties.

The lobby, auditorium, and projection booth are central to the character of the palace type. Also, any additional public spaces such as galleries, lounges, meeting areas, and play areas for children and their decorative treatments are to be considered central to the character of the palace if part of the original design. Eligible theaters must retain auditorium integrity. Alterations completed during the period of significance may reflect the evolution of film entertainment and should be evaluated within that context with careful attention to the characteristics which convey the distinct palace-type classification.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number F Page 10

Alterations to the lobby, projection booth, and other character defining features must be carefully evaluated to determine the impact to the significant character of the structure. The evaluation must consider impacts to the progression of style(s) throughout, the expression of the style itself i.e. atmospheric, the design of traffic patterns, and the technological features represented in its projection, exhibition, acoustical, mechanical, communication, and management systems.

To be eligible for listing in the National Register as a palace-era theater, the property must meet the general registration requirements for movie theaters. Additional registration requirements for the palace-era theaters are the same as palaces with consideration to the degree in which they differ in scale and application of style. Similarly, with alterations and additions, evaluations must carefully consider the impact to the character of the distinct palace-era theaters. Regarding moved properties, exceptions--as with palaces--may be considered due to the extraordinary nature of palace-era theaters symbolizing the pinnacle of film entertainment within the community and when all other character defining features have been retained.

I. Name of Property Type Conventional Theaters 1935-1948

### II. Description

In response to the depressed economy, the construction of conventional theaters reflected a reduction in excessive ornamentation for the facilities which showcased film. They featured themes or topical treatments to enhance their streamlined environment rather than serve as examples of a recognized style of architecture. Some represented styles associated with major film studios. The rectangular steel-framed and reinforced concrete structure with flat or vaulted roof was often sited away from the older commercial cores. Scale and plan decreased from the palace parameters. Frequently seating capacities were for 500 although conventional theaters ranged from 300 to 1000 or more. The structures were both free-standing and adjoined to other commercial properties. Commercial spaces were sometimes accommodated to one or both sides of the main entrance.

The plan of the conventional theater was common to most types. The exterior featured a prominent facade with projecting marquee, a recessed entry and on the interior a lobby with lounges and an auditorium. Stadium seating was common and the addition of balconies rare. The design often emphasized asymmetry. Traffic patterns were often directed through the public spaces with the use of curving walls and indirect lighting. Appointments were designed for patron's comfort and ease of movement throughout with minimum assistance from staff.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number F Page 11

---

### III. Significance

Conventional theaters are closely associated with a significant change in film entertainment. Economical impacts to the industry were brought on in part by the Depression, shifting populations, and World War II. Conventional theaters represent the resulting shift in theater design, location, and management. Persons principal to the industry as well as architects from this period contributed to the changes reflected by conventional theaters. Their streamlined designs kept pace with economic pressures while maintaining important exhibition features. The architectural significance of the conventional theater is due to its blend of style and function that is distinct from the ornamental excesses characteristic of palace-era theaters.

Although more evident among palace-era designs, the conventional theaters are also significant in representing the last of the theater types which were largely constructed and managed by major studio chains. In 1948, the economic emphasis within the industry shifted again. The passage of the anti-trust acts that year effectively eliminated incentives for the film studios' substantial investment in theater construction. The eventual shift in emphasis within the industry to favor production of films and finance further technological improvements, cost theaters their wealthiest marketing champions.

### IV. Registration Requirements:

To be eligible for listing in the National Register, a conventional theater must meet the general movie theater registration requirements and strongly convey its historical character in physical and associative ways. In addition it must have documented historical significance when evaluated within the context of film entertainment history.

The form of the conventional theater, both interior and exterior, is significant. The plan, if the theater is part of a commercial complex of any scale, must be evident in eligible theaters. The exterior of eligible theaters must retain character defining features of a distinct style, mix of styles, or theme. They must also retain integrity of scale, massing, and exterior cladding and trim in order to convey their historic character. Many character defining elements--prominent facade, projecting marquee, recessed entryway, ticket-booth, and decorative lighting treatments--are integral to the theater's function and style(s)/theme(s) and eligible properties will retain those features. Alterations must be carefully evaluated to determine the impact to the significant character of the structure. Additions or alterations to the theater completed during the period of significance may reflect the evolution of film entertainment and should be evaluated within that context.

Location and setting are central to the visually prominent movie theaters. Moved properties will not be eligible.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number F Page 12

---

Eligible theaters must retain interior integrity. Included among the character defining features is evidence of a style, mix of styles, or theme. Other character defining features include flooring and wall materials, seating and light fixtures, proscenium, stage, screens and backdrops, curtains, projection booth, mechanical equipment (projection, heating, ventilation, lighting, sound accompaniment, stage, intercom), stylistic treatments reflecting a theme or enhancing the environment (ornamentation, wall and ceiling decorative treatments, lighting), and organ. Retention of those features is desirable in eligible properties. The lobby, auditorium, projection booth, and traffic plan are central to the character of the conventional theater. Eligible theaters must retain auditorium integrity. Alterations to the lobby, projection, and other character defining features must be carefully evaluated to determine the impact to the significant character of the structure. Additions or alterations to the interior of the theater completed during the period of significance may reflect the evolution of film entertainment and should be evaluated within that context. Exceptions to the fifty year requirement may be considered for the conventional theater type when the property retains interior and exterior integrity; represents a distinct style, mix of styles, or theme; and is the most significant conventional theater within the community.

## G. Summary of Identification & Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

The Movie Theaters in Washington State 1900 to 1948 Multiple Property Listing and Film Entertainment in Washington (1900 to 1948) Historic Context were developed from a component of the Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) comprehensive preservation planning process which has identified broad themes or patterns in Washington history. Entertainment is one of those themes and film entertainment is now identified as one of the sub-themes.

### Data Collection:

The multiple property listing of movie theaters in Washington State 1900 to 1948 was initially based on data compiled by Kay Austin from 1988-1990 while developing three individual National Register nominations on theaters. Kay Austin served as project manager on the project identified as a draft multiple property listing on historic theaters. The process of data collection included: 1) organization of existing data related to the multiple property listing components, 2) generation of draft multiple property listing components from the data, 3) development of an inventory of historic theaters, 4) sampling properties from the inventory through selective survey for identification of the range of diversity within the property type, and 5) collection of facts associated with the theme of entertainment from local, state, and national public and private sources.

☒ See continuation sheet

## H. Major Bibliographical References

- Austin, Kay, A., et. al. *Built in Washington: 12,000 Years of Pacific Northwest Archaeological Sites and Historic Buildings*. Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1989.
- Avery, Mary W. *Washington: A History of the Evergreen State*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975.
- Berelson, Bernard and Grant, Howard. "The Frontier Theater in Washington." *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, April 1937, pp. 115-136.
- Billboard*. Published weekly. Cincinnati, Ohio: Billboard Publishing Co., 1903-1916.
- "Blue Mouse Theatre, Portland, Oregon." *Marquee*, Vol. 9, No. 3., 1977.
- Boettcher, Burt J. "Stage Rigging in Historic Theatres." *LHAT Bulletin*, January 1990.
- Bowers, Q. David. *Nickelodeon Theatres and Their Music*. Vestal, New York: Vestal Press, Ltd., 1986.
- *The Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments*. Vestal, New York: Vestal Press, Ltd., 1972.
- *Put Another Nickel In*. Vestal, New York: Vestal Press, Ltd., 1966.
- Brownlow, Kevin. *Hollywood: The Pioneers*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979.

☒ See continuation sheet.

Primary location of additional documentation:

- ☐ State historic preservation office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency

- ☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

## I. Form Prepared By

name/title	Kay A. Austin, Local Preservation Programs Coordinator	date	August 16, 1991
organization	Archaeology & Historic Preservation	telephone	206/753-9109
street & number	111 W. 21st Ave., KL-11	state	Washington
city or town	Olympia	zip code	98504



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number   G   Page   2  

Resources developed to assist and guide data collection included a draft context, property type templates, and an inventory of extant theaters fifty years or older. The inventory or base list of theaters fifty years or older was compiled from cross-referencing fifty year old directories with current directories. The cross-referenced list was expanded to include known information about the properties i.e. function, register status, age, architect, seating capacity, style, integrity, historic names, location, owner/manager/entrepreneur.

The survey methodology selected considered the limited resources and personnel available for the project. The methodology involved sampling and evaluation by comparison with existing data. Over the course of three years, OAHP staff conducted site visits to selected properties in conjunction with planned program activities. Selection criteria for site visits included properties representative of the evolution in live and film entertainment and communities representative of Washington's geographic, economic, and historical diversity. The research effort on the context conducted concurrently with the survey effort provided specific direction to the locale and degree of sampling necessary i.e. properties representative of studio chain design/construction, or properties associated with pre-railroad minstrel/variety-vaudeville routes, or properties reflecting the characteristics from the brief era of nickelodeons. Site visits included touring and documenting the property, meeting with residents associated with the property, and conducting research among local collections and records. Other individuals associated with data collection included historic preservation officers for Certified Local Governments, residents associated with specific theaters, and historians specializing in related resources or related disciplines.

### Development of Multiple Property Listing Components:

(Context, property types, and registration requirements) Historic theaters are a numerous yet threatened resource for the state. OAHP staff determination to develop the statewide multiple property listing on historic theaters was based on the availability of state grants ear-marked for rehabilitation of historic theaters and the foundation of research materials available from recent National Register theater nominations. Development of the context indicated a distinction between theaters built before and after the advent of film entertainment. Selection of the latter as the focus of the multiple property listing was based in part on 1) theater types to be and likely to be impacted by grant generated rehabilitation efforts and therefore requiring definitive registration requirements, 2) the theater types represented by local active theater support groups, and 3) the threat to resources associated to film entertainment i.e. projection equipment and film distribution and management properties.

Sources of primary and secondary data available to develop the context were numerous. Several books provided essential and insightful information on properties related to the theme. David Naylor's *American Picture Palaces* as well as his inventory published as *Great American Movie Theaters* were invaluable in providing data on the significance of function and style, character defining features for types, pivotal events and significant personalities associated with film entertainment, and the architectural

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number   G   Page   3  

heritage from which the great palaces were derived. His text also stimulated further research into the forms of entertainment housed in the nation's earliest theaters and the development and evolution of entertainment circuits. *Nickelodeon Theaters and Their Music* by David Bowers provided essential data for understanding the technological developments associated with film exhibition and the development of construction techniques applied to the first theaters designed specifically for film entertainment. Eugene Clinton Elliott's *History of Variety-Vaudeville in Seattle: From the Beginning to 1914* offered insight into the impact of the entertainment industry on Washington state, the first entertainment entrepreneurs and the variety-vaudeville circuits which eventually evolved into the film studio distribution and management circuits, as well as the distinction between theaters constructed in Washington before and after the advent of film.

Subsequent to redefining the theme to represent film entertainment and establishing the time-period to coincide with the advent of film exhibition to the passage of the anti-trust acts which significantly impacted theater construction, the inventory and survey results served to distinguish categories of construction and exhibition evident in the extant historic theaters in Washington. The result was the identification of four distinctive property types: 1) nickelodeon, 2) combination houses, 3) palaces and palace era theaters, and 4) conventional theaters. The dates associated with each property type span the years during which the type could be constructed given the function, style, and architectural parameters of the period.

In establishing the registration requirements for each property type, a base level of integrity was identified for all nominations to the multiple property listing of movie theaters in Washington state from 1900 to 1948. The established requirements were developed after assessing the number and degree of integrity of the properties surveyed within each type. The general requirements reinforce the significance of function and the integrity of the principal elements which convey a property's use as a theater i.e. the auditorium. The general requirements also identify the range of interpretation of integrity when considering style. The evolution of film exhibition techniques which when evidenced by a shift in stylistic treatments from the original design are identified as significant in their own right. The individual property type registration requirements take into consideration 1) the number of resources within the type, 2) the characteristics significant to distinguishing the type from another, and 3) the significance of the architectural style(s) within the type. Exceptions to the integrity were noted for each but specifically identified for the nickelodeon property type--a rare and speculated as near extinct resource in the state.

The registration requirements, both general and property type specific, also considered the predicted threats. The specific language of the requirements as well as the detailed accounting of all character defining features for each property type are purposeful. It is the expectation that the evaluation of future nominations will reveal further significance to listed characteristics and contribute to the overall understanding of the importance of theaters as symbols of the economic and social development of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number   G   Page   4  

---

communities, the significance of properties related to associated industries, and lead to knowledgeable decisions as to the fate of significant characteristics when considering rehabilitation proposals.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number H Page 2

- Caffin, Caroline and De Zayas, Marius. *Vaudeville*. New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1914.
- Clark, Norman H. *Washington: A Bicentennial History*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1976.
- "Classifying Theatres." *Marquee*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1985.
- Csida, Joseph and June Bundy Csida. *American Entertainment*. New York: Watson-Guptill, 1978.
- Dimmick, Ruth Crosby. *Our Theatres Today and Yesterday*. New York: The K. K. Fly Co., 1913.
- Ducibella, Joseph R. and B. Andrew Corsini. "Decorative Theatre Lighting: A Pictorial Survey." *Theatre Historical Society Annual*, No. 15, 1988.
- Dynes, Walter. *Palaces of Europe*. Feltham, Great Britain: Hamlyn Publishing Group, Ltd., 1968.
- Elliott, Eugene Clinton. *A History of Variety-Vaudeville in Seattle: From the Beginning to 1914*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1944.
- Ficken, Robert, and Charles Le Warne. *Washington: A Centennial History*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988.
- "The Fifth Avenue Theatre of Seattle." *Theatre Historical Society Annual*, No. 11, 1984.
- Foort, Reginald. *The Cinema Organ*. 2nd ed. Vestal, New York: Vestal Press, Ltd., 1970.
- Francisco, Charles. *The Radio City Music Hall: An Affectionate History of the World's Greatest Theater*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979.
- Grant, Howard F. *The Story of Seattle's Early Theatres*. Seattle: University Book Store, 1934.
- Grau, Robert. *The Business Man in the Amusement World*. New York: Broadway Publishing Co., 1910.
- Griffith, Richard and Arthur Mayer. *The Movies*. New York: Bonanza Books, 1957.
- Grossmann, John. "Encore for Spectacular Theaters." *Historic Preservation*, April 1985.
- Hall, Ben M. *The Best Remaining Seats*. New York: Clarkson Potter, 1961.
- Hamlin, Talbot. *Architecture Through the Ages*. New York: Putnam, 1940.
- Helgesen, Terry. "Grand Drapes, Tormentors, and Teasers." *Theatre Historical Society Annual*, No. 10, 1983.
- Herzog, Charlotte. "The Nickelodeon Phase (1903-1917)." *Marquee*, 1st quarter 1981, n.p.
- "History of the Movie Palace." *Marquee*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1984.
- Hulfish, Davis S. *Cyclopedia of Motion Picture Work*. 2 vols. Chicago: American Technical Society, 1911.
- Hornblow, Arthur. *A History of the Theatre in America*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1919.
- Izenour, George C. *Theatre Design*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979.
- "John Eberson's Deco Theatres." *Theatre Historical Society Annual*, No. 16, 1989.
- Junchen, David L. *Encyclopedia of the American Theatre Organ*. Vol. 1. Pasadena: Showcase Publications, 1985.
- Kaufmann, Preston J. "Skouras-ized for Showmanship." *Theatre Historical Society of America Annual*, No. 14, 1987.
- Kelly, Jessica H. "John Cort: The Frohman of the West." *The Coast*, March 1907, pp. 144-147.
- Krinsky, Carol. *Rockefeller Center*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- LHAT Bulletin*. Published monthly. League of Historic American Theatres. 1977-1990.
- Lincoln, Fred. "Vaudeville in the Northwest." *Washington Magazine*, September, 1906, pp. 29-30.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number H Page 3

- Lindsay, Vachel. *The Art of the Moving Picture*. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1915.
- Mackay, Constance D'Arcy. *The Little Theater in the United States*. New York: Holt & Co., 1935.
- Marquee*. Published quarterly. Theatre Historical Society of America, 1969-1990.
- Mast, Jerald. *A Short History of the Movies*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1976.
- Meloy, Arthur S. *Theatres and Motion Picture Houses*. New York: Architects' Supply and Publishing Co., 1916.
- Motion Picture Magazine*. Brooklyn, New York: 1913-1916.
- Moving Picture World*. New York: 1912-1916.
- Naylor, David. *American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1981.
- *Great American Movie Theaters*. Washington, D. C.: Preservation Press, 1987.
- "Nickelodeon Issue (Special)." *Marquee*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1981.
- "Oriental Theatre, Portland, Oregon." *Marquee*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1987.
- "Palaces of Dreams: Movie Theatres of John Eberson." *LHAT Bulletin*, February 1990.
- "A Pictorial Survey of Marquees." *Theatre Historical Society Annual*, No. 7, 1980.
- Pildas, Ave, and Lucinda Smith. *Movie Palaces: Survivors of an Elegant Era*. New York: Clarkson Potter, 1980.
- Reed, Edward. "Vaudeville Again." *Theatre Arts Monthly*, October, 1933, p. 803.
- Rhode, Eric. *A History of the Cinema From Its Origins to 1970*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1976.
- Richardson, F. H. *Motion Picture Handbook*. 3rd ed. New York: Motion Picture World Publishers, 1916.
- Savage, Henry W. "The Dilemma of the Theatre." *Saturday Evening Post*, May 1912, n.p.
- Shand, P. Morton. *Motion Picture Houses and Theatres*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1930.
- Simmons, Oliver. "Passing of the Sullivan Dynasty." *Munsey's Magazine*, December 1913, pp. 407-416.
- "Stories of Seattle Successes: John Cort." *The Coast*, February 1904, pp. 67-68.
- Theatre Classics*. The League of Historic American Theatres Annual, 1976-1990.
- Theatre Organ*. American Theatre Organ Enthusiasts, 1955-1985.
- "Theatre Preservation Issue." *Marquee*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1983.
- "Thomas W. Lamb Theatres." *Marquee*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1989.
- Toll, Robert C. *On With the Show: The First Century of Show Business in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Woodbridge, Sally B., and Roger Montgomery. *A Guide to Architecture in Washington State: An Environmental Perspective*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980.
- Worthington, Clifford. *The Influence of the Cinema on Contemporary Auditorium Design*. London: Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1932.