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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 Majestic Theatre

#300000

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 1925 Elm Street

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3

CITY, TOWN
Dallas

___ VICINITY OF

STATE
Texas

CODE
048

COUNTY
Dallas

CODE
113

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME City of Dallas, Texas

STREET & NUMBER
City Hall, Property Manager's Office

CITY, TOWN
Dallas

___ VICINITY OF

STATE
Texas

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Dallas County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
600 South Commerce

CITY, TOWN
Dallas

STATE
Texas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Dallas Historic Landmarks Survey

DATE Summer - Fall 1974

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS Dallas Dept. of Urban Planning, Dallas, Texas 500 So. Ervay

CITY, TOWN
Dallas

STATE
Texas

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Designed by the noted theatre architect, John Ebersson, Dallas' Majestic Theatre is exemplary of the opulent theatre popularized in America during the twentieth century. Located in downtown Dallas, the structure is fronted on Elm Street and is surrounded by commercial buildings. The cornerstone was placed on 18 October 1920 and the theatre opened 11 April 1921. The building spans five bays and is five stories tall.

Built as the flagship of the Interstate Theatre chain, its twentieth century interpretation of the Renaissance Revival style was suitably ornate and expressive of the prominence the Majestic wished to suggest. The exterior of the theatre essentially remains unchanged, with the exception of the first floor elevation which has received extensive remodeling. Originally a large canopy projected over the entire first floor elevation. While the canopy's detailing mirrored the classical references of the building, the overall form was reminiscent of the art nouveau. A large marquee extended vertically from the fourth floor level over the canopy. In 1948 the canopy was enclosed by a new larger marquee. A series of tripartite windows set into square and arched frames extends across the front elevation of the second through fourth stories. Fifth story square windows are framed by elaborate moldings. The structure is terminated by an enriched cornice of applied ornament. The floors are divided by decorative panels. Large scored pilasters marked by sculptural ornament act as vertical terminating elements, while smaller scored pilasters divide the bays.

The interior has been divided into theatre and office space. Offices which house the headquarters of Karl Hoblitzelle's Interstate Theatres occupy about 20,000 square feet of the upper four floors in the forward portion of the building. Remodelled in the art deco style, much of the office furniture and fixtures remain intact. Entrance to this area is gained by means of an elevator which is accessible via a separate street entrance.

The main lobby and the theatre have experienced only superficial modifications, and thus have retained much of their ornate detailing. In the lobby, the black and white Italian marble floor has been carpeted. Also, chandeliers have been removed and a large fountain has been replaced with a concession stand. Both the chandelier and the fountain are in storage and could easily be returned to their original locations. The lobby and theatre are enhanced by a plethora of details which allude to their classical sources. These areas are

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marked by Corinthian columns, egg and dart molding, cartouches, Roman swags and fretwork. At one time mirrors, large potted plants and several stuffed peacocks, the symbol of the theatre, completed the once dazzling interior decor.

Eberson was nationally known for this "atmospheric theatres" which often features ceiling "skies" of floating clouds and twinkling stars mechanically controlled. The Majestic was one of his atmospheric theatres and the machinery that produced these effects remains intact. A proscenium theatre, the stage was set back beneath an arch flanked by massive Corinthian columns. The orchestra pit was sunken in order that the audience would not be distracted. Seating for 2400 was laid out in the shape of a fan and was arranged on three levels - the main floor and two balconies. Originally the seats were of woven cane, each with its own hat rack for the gentlemen. Ceiling fans and lighting fixtures original to the auditorium have been removed. The auditorium walls are decorated with large paintings set into panels which reflect the theme of the theatre, "Roman gardens."

Backstage there is a six foot high fly loft to accommodate backdrops and other scenery. An original set of wooden light controls is of special interest. Offstage are twelve dressing rooms. Other original facilities included a spacious men's smoking lounge and a nursery called "Majesticland," complete with a slide, carousel and a petting zoo, where children could be left while their parents viewed the show.

Currently the building is owned by the City of Dallas. It is their intention to restore much of the original fabric of the structure for use as a center for the performing arts.

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 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 1921

BUILDER/ARCHITECT John Eberson

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Dallas' Majestic Theatre stands today as a reminder not only of the city's architectural heritage, but also of its social and cultural past. A classic example of the once prominent, opulent movie palace that is all too quickly disappearing, the Majestic's physical quality reflects cultural preferences that no longer exist. The present structure was built to replace an earlier Majestic that had been built in 1905, but had burned. The first building had been one of four original theatres that would later grow into the great chain known as Interstate Theatres. The new Majestic cornerstone was placed on 18 October 1920 and the theatre celebrated its opening night on 11 April 1921.

Karl Hoblitzelle (1879-1967) was the main force behind the Majestic, as well as the entire Interstate group. Hoblitzelle was instrumental in the organization of Interstate Amusements in 1905. This chain acted as a link for entertainers traveling between the east and west coasts. Originally he did not wish to be actively involved in the operation and took over reluctantly when his backing was required. By 1906 he had become president. It was his intention to bring good clean entertainment to the people of the southwest and vaudeville was his medium. Concerned with the potential questionable, risqué nature of vaudeville, Hoblitzelle personally screened each act. If the act could not be altered to meet certain standards of respectability, it was discarded. It was the interest of the corporation and its president to provide entertainment for the entire family. Safety, comfort, and courtesy were stressed for the patron; "Dedicated to community service" was the motto. When movies became part of the entertainment package, it was his practice to show films of diverse viewpoints if he felt they were beneficial to the public.

Hoblitzelle was a pioneer in the theatre industry. His were the first theatres in the southwest to install air-conditioning and they were the first to be wired for the new sound films. Hoblitzelle was also an innovator in the use of earphones in the seats for the

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hard-of-hearing, crying rooms where mothers could take their children and ~~continue to watch the show and "kiddie" seats so that children could see better.~~ Also known as a philanthropist, throughout his life he was involved in operations beneficial not only to the community, but also to the nation. He worked for the establishment of a Texas Rural Development Commission to help Texas farmers through rural planning. With a \$250,000 gift he founded and helped fund the Texas State Research Foundation. During WWI he went to Washington to assist the Red Cross in organizing entertainment programs for hospitals. His contributions aided Southwestern Medical Foundation, Southern Methodist University, and the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts. During and after WWII Hoblitzelle was awarded for his activities during the conflict.

In 1930 Hoblitzelle sold his group to RKO (Radio-Keith-Orpheum) and Paramount Pictures. Intending to retire, he took his wife on a tour of Europe. As it became apparent that neither company was able to maintain the chain due to financial problems caused by the depression, he decided to return home and repossess the organization. By doing so, he saved the jobs of many of his associates and employees.

Originally, the bill was for seven acts of vaudeville twice daily, but in 1925 with the increasing influence of the film industry, motion pictures were added to the fare. Until the mid-30's, films supplemented the live entertainment. But vaudeville was dying out and movies became the chief source of entertainment. The Majestic was known as the "action house" for it was here that movies of an adventurous nature were most often shown in Dallas. In 1949, a serious attempt was made to revive vaudeville at the theatre. This endeavor was not successful and eventually the theatre again offered only movies. In 1951, the Interstate organization was once more sold to Paramount, but the Majestic was not included when the one hundred and sixty-five theatres changed hands. It remained in the possession of the Hoblitzelle Foundation. Movies were shown at the Majestic until it closed in July 1973. After three years of negotiation, the theatre was given to the City of Dallas on 28 October 1976.

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The list of theatrical, musical, vaudeville and motion picture stars that have performed on the Majestic stage is impressive. The opening night performance was given by the "incomparable" ballerina, Olga Petrova. At that time, telegrams of congratulations were sent by Gloria Swanson, William S. Hart and Dorothy Gish. Mae West performed there, as did the comedians Jack Benny, Burns & Allen, Milton Berle, and Bob Hope. The magicians Houdini, Blackwell and Thurston astounded audiences with their sleight of hand and mystifying routines. Ginger Rogers started her career at the Majestic. Duke Ellington's and Cab Calloway's bands, as well as John Wayne, James Stewart and Joan Crawford made appearances at the theatre.

The history of the Majestic Theatre is colorful and the structure essentially represents the entertainment industry at its height of glamour and romance in the 1930's and 1940's. It stands as a memorial to Karl Hoblitzelle, a prominent figure who established a respectable social and cultural center for Dallas' citizens and to its architect, John Eberson, who was to become the principal architect for the Interstate chain.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Dallas, Texas. City of Dallas. D. B. Alexander, "Dallas Historical Architectural Survey," September, 1974.
 Dallas, Texas. City of Dallas, Dallas Park and Recreation Board, "Report on the Majestic Theater, Dallas, Texas."

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

A	14	706555	3629250	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

Joe R. Williams, Director; Marlene E. Heck, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Texas Historical Commission, National Register Dept. 6/1/77

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 12276, Capitol Station

DATE

TELEPHONE

(512) 475-3094

CITY OR TOWN

Austin

STATE

Texas 78711

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

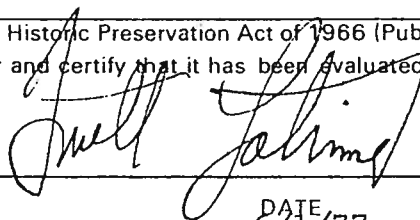
NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE
6/1/77

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Mullen, Donald C. The Development of the Playhouse. Berkely and Los Angeles:
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MAJESTIC THEATER BOUNDARIES

ALL THAT certain parcel of land lying and being situated in the City and County of Dallas, Texas, more particularly described as follows:

BEING a tract of land in the John Grigsby Survey, Abstract No. 495, Dallas County, Texas, and being in Block 94, official City numbers,

the land herein to be conveyed being more particularly described as follows:

BEGINNING at a point in the north right of way line of Elm Street, said point being located a distance of 238.69 feet from the intersection of the north R.O.W. line of Elm Street with the east R.O.W. line of St. Paul Street;

THENCE in an easterly direction a distance of 100.00 feet to a point for corner;

THENCE in a northerly direction, through an angle of 90°, a distance of 80.00 feet, to a point for corner;

THENCE in an easterly direction, through an angle of 90°, a distance of 10.00 feet, to a point for corner;

THENCE in a northerly direction, through an angle of 90°, a distance of 120.00 feet, to a point for corner,

THENCE in a westerly direction, through an angle of 90°, a distance of 110.00 feet, to a point for corner;

THENCE in a southerly direction, through an angle of 90°, a distance of 200.00 feet, to the PLACE OF BEGINNING, and containing approximately 21,200 square feet.