

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic PLAZA THEATRE

and/or common CAPITOL THEATER

2. Location

street & number 123 Summers Street \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Charleston \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district

state WV code 54 county Kanawha code 039

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A 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 Capitol Renaissance '84-1 Ltd/Mr. James P. Bazzle, General Partner

street & number 1010 Washington Street, East

city, town Charleston \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state WV

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kanawha County Courthouse

street & number Court and Virginia Streets

city, town Charleston \_\_\_\_\_ state WV

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Downtown Charleston, W. Va.  
title Historical and Architectural Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date September 1984 \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Department of Culture and History, SHPO

city, town Charleston \_\_\_\_\_ state WV

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

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

The Capitol Theater building is a turn-of-the-century theater/commercial/office building located in a transitional business district of downtown Charleston, West Virginia. The three-story brick structure is characterized by eclectic Classical Revival style architecture incorporating a number of elements from classical Greek forms on its easterly facade. The theater, whose street front entrance is flanked by two commercial storefronts, is structurally attached to a series of commercial buildings completing the Summers Street block. The dimensions of the Capitol Theater building are 53' wide x 163' deep. The front section contains the main entry foyer and two stores on the ground floor, leading into the middle section, composed of an auditorium and stage area, a mezzanine with two restrooms, and a third floor balcony and projection area. Additional support facilities include double stairways and office space. A basement is located under the front section of the building and under the stage at the rear of the building.

The classical facade of the theater is divided into three distinct segments by four engaged brick pilasters surmounted by stylized Corinthian capitals with an eloquent acanthus motif. (Photograph 1.) The second and third story windows of this front elevation have been replaced (1956) with smaller steel casement units. Scrollwork ornamentation was lifted from the original facade and reinstalled with the replacement windows. Four of these twelve scrolled ornaments are now missing. The facade brick is green glazed brick with black mortar. (Photograph 2.) A decorative belt course separates the window section from the upper entablature which features strong classical ornamental details, including a belt of scrolled dentils along the upper cornice. Above the parapet rests a decorative pediment spanning the middle segment of the structure with repeating scrolled dentils. The pediment is inset with a classical frieze featuring two human forms supporting a decorative oval rondel. (Photograph 2.) The entire upper entablature appears to be covered by a thick layer of residue and pigeon droppings, but otherwise is in excellent condition. No permanent damage is apparent (from street level). (Photograph 3.)

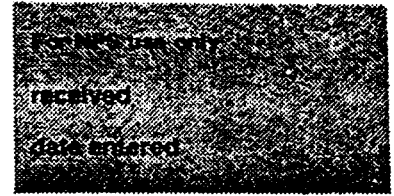
The street level facade has received the most cosmetic alteration, with evidence that the original theater marquee was much different in location and dimension. (Photograph 4.) The original theater marquee was located just above an arched and vaulted entrance over a front foyer which measured 18 feet wide by 50 feet deep. In 1956, alterations in the Art Deco style significantly changed the entrance, eradicating the vault completely, and incorporating a contemporary, electrified marquee directly over the entrance and north storefront. (Photograph 5.) It was at this time that the windows were changed on the second floor and additional office space was provided in the area of the vaulted ceiling space. The entrance was fitted with aluminum doors including a modernized ticket window. Prior to the 1956 renovations, the original facade pilasters extended downward to the sidewalk, ending in a stone base. (Photographs 4 and 1.) At the present, nearly all of the lower facade is obscured by aluminum facing with a vertical striated pattern (c. 1956).

The two storefronts, located on either side of the entrance, were also fitted with a continuation of the metal facing, surmounted by glazed tile panels in alternating beige and green checkerboard pattern (c. 1956). A barber shop has operated in the north storefront for a number of years, and the south commercial space housed a defunct restaurant (Photograph 1.)-- which beginning in June, 1985 -- is undergoing renovation as a turn-of-the-century ice cream parlor. The facade is being restored as nearly as is

(See continuation sheet 7-2)

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practical to its original configuration.

Entrance to the theater is made through the lobby which was also altered in 1956, and carries the Art Deco imprint in its terrazzo floor, inset with a stylized star pattern, over which a plain Deco ceiling has been dropped from the original vault ceiling. (Photograph 6.) Beyond the second set of wooden doors, evidence remains that the original mosaic tile floor, with a variegated green acanthus leaf motif on a white field, is still intact below the present floor covering.

The auditorium is 110 feet deep (including the stage) by 53 feet wide. (Photograph 7.) A balcony extends over two-thirds of the main seating area. The mezzanine and balcony are reached by a flanking set of wooden stairs with inset panels.

The main floor of the theater slopes down to the stage, accomodating two aisles between a center section of seating and the side seating. The original radial seating (c. 1956) numbering approximately 700 seats has been removed (June, 1985) to allow renovation of the interior space. The balcony still retains the original (c. 1924) wooden (approximately 500 seats) seating in lower and upper balcony sections. These seats are of bent plywood with walnut veneer backs, cast iron frames, and upholstered seats. A portion of these seats have damaged veneer and upholstery.

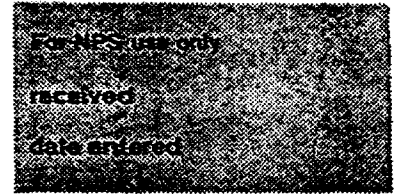
The plasterwork in the theater is noteworthy for its variety of classical ornamentation and allegorical motifs. The gentle elliptical ceiling is plaster featuring a repetitive stylized acanthus motif in relief. (Photograph 8.) The vine motif spirals inward to meet a multi-petaled rosette. The cross section of the ceiling above the balcony splays to meet a band containing a stylized version of a smaller spiraling acanthus (without rosette) in relief. The ceiling at the front of the theater curves toward the proscenium opening. (Photograph 9.) Large gratings of cast plaster can be seen in the ceiling above the proscenium. This covers an opening through which the original 1924 Wurlitzer theater pipe organ's sound entered the room. This configuration is designed to direct sound to the back of the auditorium. The proscenium is moderately decorative with repetitive banded friezes and relief plaster work. The outer bands feature a low relief motif with rosettes (Photograph 10.); the adjacent band moving inward features a half-rounded band of stylized acanthus leaves in high relief. The next lattice band frames the stage proscenium -- the interior panel of which contains a wide belt displaying a butterfly, decorative element.

Greek figures featuring a procession of forms in motion are used twice in the theater. Dancing Greek women in plaster relief enliven the curved balcony apron. An additional procession of classical figures appear around the coffered mezzanine ceiling frieze -- repeating the articulation of the mezzanine balustrade shape. (Photograph 11.) The frieze appears below a domed inset for a focal lighting fixture, and presents a display of the performing arts in frieze: including recititation, a player of a lyre, etc. The frieze is surmounted by the Greek lotus motif, also used around the lower part of the ceiling dome.

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Directly underneath the balcony are plaster medallions in classical floral relief bordered with horizontal trim of shallow cornice relief. (Photograph 12.) Rectangular segments of the first floor ceiling and side walls are bordered in a repetitive scallop motif.

At the rear of the theater, the stage is separated from the auditorium seating area by a narrow orchestra pit and a scoop of 1920's era footlights. The proscenium has a 30'-0" opening and the stage is an average of 22'-0" deep. Prior to rehabilitation work, the former stage loading door was blocked by air conditioning equipment installed in the 1950's. The floor of the stage had rotted where water had leaked from a corroded roof drain. The stage was dominated by a massive movie screen on a heavy timbered frame. The stage electrical equipment, though partially functional, was in a highly deteriorated condition.

Beneath the stage, six dressing rooms averaging sixty square feet each, shared space with a large air handler unit and a steam heating boiler. The entire stage and under-stage area is being rehabilitated as a functional performing arts facility.

## 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1912 - 1924

Builder/Architect P. Norwood Wiggins

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Capitol Theater is one of the few remaining structures of its functional type and architectural style along the lines of the early opera/vaudeville houses and later movie theaters in the entire Kanawha Valley. It is a classic example of Classical Revival architecture and an atypical theater/commercial/office building that pre-dominates neighboring structures of the same period.

From the time the structure was built in 1912, the Plaza Theatre --"Home of High Class Vaudeville and Novel Attractions"-- has remained an ongoing entertainment center, in 1924 becoming the Capitol Theater, changing only to meet the demands of changing entertainment preferences over a 73 year period. Historically, the structure was originally constructed as an opera house featuring live vaudeville and stage acts, and also showing silent films. A fire in the fall of 1923 created a major turning point for the theater. The rebuilt "new Capitol Theater" opened in November of 1924 with a gala event for Charlestonians. The new theater was refitted for "talkies," although the seats were arranged so that vaudeville stage acts could still be presented. Highlights of the new theater were 1) the installation of the new Wurlitzer pipe organ at a cost of \$25,000 which would enhance the silent films, and later the "talking films" after 1929, and 2) the installation of state-of-the-art electrical and lighting systems with house dimmers. The theater's owner/manager, C. E. Midelburg, reportedly attributed the success of the business to his policy of showing MGM movies exclusively.

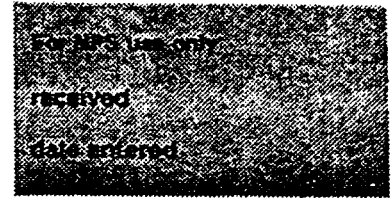
The Aaron family (Sharon Lee Corporation) acquired the theater (one of ten owned in the City) in 1959. The building was closed as a movie theater in 1981, and remained vacant until purchased in December 1984, by a private group of investors, Capitol Renaissance '84-1 Ltd. A contributing factor behind this purchase was the 1983 loss of one of the primary historic and lavish movie houses of the city -- the Kearse Theater at 161, 165, 167 Summers Street -- razed to become a parking lot. The Kearse was one block north of the Capitol Theater.

Another motivational factor associated with the purchase of the Capitol Theater is its reference point as a structure identified for primary revitalization in the 1983 plan by American Cities Corporation to be among the first two revitalization projects of downtown Charleston (the first being the waterfront redevelopment adjacent to the Kanawha River). The Capitol Theater was slated to be rehabilitated as a performing arts center -- either by a public effort, or by private development. Beginning in April, 1985, construction commenced in the theater building to halt the slow deterioration of the structure and to rehabilitate the interior, under adaptive-use principles, as a new performing arts and entertainment center.

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Therefore, the Capitol Theater is in the process of becoming a "pioneer" project toward revitalizing the deteriorating part of the old business district in Charleston.

Because of its important structural qualities, outstanding acoustical properties, and the fact that nearly all interior and exterior historic decorative elements remain intact, the Capitol Theater is a "star" candidate for a restoration/rehabilitation which will give new life to its original historic fabric.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

"Historic Properties Inventory Form," Historic Preservation Unit, Department of Culture and History, Charleston, W.Va., Feb.1, 1984. (Prepared by Greg Lipscomb).

Marshall, Paul D., "Historical and Architectural Survey/Downtown Charleston, West Virginia," September 24, 1984. (See continuation sheet 9-2)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 0.19 ac

Quadrangle name Charleston West

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Stands of lot no.14, found in Kanawha County Deed Books 103/594 and 117/76. The lot is 53 feet wide, north to south, on the west side of Summers Street x 163 feet deep east to west to a 15' wide alley which runs north to south from Quarrier St. to a parking area behind lots number 15, 16, and 17.

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

Ms. Morgan Peyton, Consultant, Capitol Renaissance '84-1 Ltd.

name/title Paul D. Marshall, Architect, Paul D. Marshall & Associates, Inc.

organization

date July 27, 1985

street & number 123 Summers Street

telephone (304) 346-8742 (Theater)  
(304) 343-4452 (Ms. Peyton)  
(304) 343-5310 (Mr. Marshall)

city or town Charleston

state WV

## 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 9-9-85

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

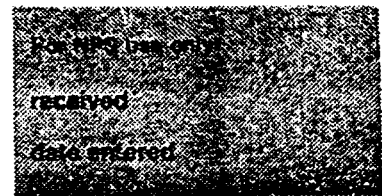
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Russell, Howard. "Historical Notes on the Capitol-Plaza Theater," April, 1985.

Charleston Daily Mail (Charleston, WV). November 11, 1924. Article on re-opening of  
New Capitol Theater.

Charleston City Directory, 1913.

Development Program: Downtown Charleston, West Virginia. American City Corporation:  
A Subsidiary of the Rouse Company, July, 1983, pp. 29 - 30.



CHARLESTON WEST QUADRANGLE  
WEST VIRGINIA  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES ORTHOPHOTOQUAD

4680 1 NE  
(BIG CHIMNEY)

443

444

1 820 000 FEET 81° 37' 30"  
38° 22' 30"

500 000  
FEET



4246

CAPITOL  
THEATER

4245

PLAZA THEATRE

123 SUMMERS ST.

CHARLESTON,

KANAWHA CO.,

WEST VIRGINIA

60

4244

4243

444 455 / 4244 626



BICYCLE RACES  
7 PM JUNE 23  
SEATING AVAILABLE  
QUARRIER & HALE ST

CAPITOL PLAZA

*Union Mission*