

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Huntington Historic District
Name of Property
Cabell, WV
County and State
07000240
NR Reference Number

State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this additional documentation move removal
 name change (additional documentation) other

meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

 Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer 9/17/2025

Signature of Certifying Official/Title: Date of Action

West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office

National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 additional documentation accepted
 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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Introduction

The purpose of this Additional Documentation is to change the status of the former Orpheum Theatre from a non-contributing resource to a contributing resource within the Downtown Huntington Historic District. The district (86000309) was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1986; the boundaries were expanded with an Additional Documentation and Boundary Increase (07000240) listed in 2007. The district is significant under *Criterion A: Commerce*; *Criterion A: Community Planning and Development*; and *Criterion C: Architecture*. The Period of Significance, as revised in the 2007 amendment, is 1871 to 1957.

The Orpheum Theatre at 1021 4th Avenue, Huntington, West Virginia was designated Resource #47 in the Downtown Huntington Historic District (Boundary Increase and Additional Documentation) and named as “Cinema/Barber Shop/Hanks.” The Description in Section 7, Page 34 was given as follows:

Two-story, flat roof, commercial building. Stepped parapet on side elevation. Original blonde brick front façade has been faced with concrete panels on the upper story and modern stone veneer on the first story; red brick and painted brick façade elsewhere. Theater has the central recessed entrance with three sets of entrance doors and the barber shop storefront to the east and “Hanks” to the west. Cinema has modern central marquee. Brick foundation. 1 bay wide. Two Part Commercial Block type.
1 non-contributing building.

The theatre, located within the 2007 boundary expansion, was labeled a non-contributing resource due to lack of integrity, caused by non-historic concrete panels and faux stone covering the original façade. In 2024-2025, the building underwent renovations including removal of the non-historic exterior materials, exposing the original brickwork and fenestration. While not a complete reversion to its original exterior appearance, the Orpheum Theatre is now able to satisfactorily convey its historic significance as a prominent early twentieth century movie theater in downtown Huntington.

Brief History of the Orpheum Theatre

In 1915, local businessman C. Lloyd Ritter demolished several homes on 4th Avenue and initiated construction of a new theater. Noted local architect Verus T. Ritter designed the \$170,000 steel, brick, and concrete facility, which featured six-over-six wood sash windows, a row of rounded arch windows, quoins, corbeling, an overhanging eave, and a modest marquee. Flanking either side of the marquee were small storefronts that could be rented out to other businesses. The interior contained seating for 1,600 patrons; a state-of-the-art heating and ventilation system; a Hope-Jones Unit Orchestra organ; and the capability to host both films and live vaudeville shows. The facility opened as the Orpheum Theatre on March 20, 1916.¹ *Motography* magazine proclaimed it “A fine example of the high plane of development which has been reached by the motion picture industry” and “not only one of the finest in Dixie but . . . a marvel of photoplay house architecture.”²

¹ James E. Casto, “Lost Huntington: The Orpheum Theatre,” *Huntington Herald-Dispatch*, December 28, 2015;

² H. A. Stewart, “Dixie’s Finest Theater,” *Motography* 51 (April 8, 1916), 817-818.

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The Orpheum was initially operated by a group of Ohio businessmen who leased it from Ritter, but just a year later, in March 1917, the Hyman family took over the lease. The Hymans built up a chain of movie theaters in Huntington and the Tri-State Area under the umbrella company Greater Huntington Theater Corp. By the 1930s, a much larger sign had been placed on top of the marquee, obscuring the rounded arch windows (see Figure 4). Eventually, the Hymans rebranded the Orpheum into the Cinema, a discount multiplex showing second-run movies. Renovations in the late 1960s or early 1970s (after the district’s Period of Significance) significantly altered the building. The interior auditorium was divided into four screening rooms. The overhanging eave was removed, and the front façade was clad with concrete panels and stone veneer (see Figure 5). The Cinema closed in 2011 and was purchased by a church two years later.³

Renovation and Revised Designation

Redemption Church, present owner of the building, initiated a series of renovations in 2024-2025 to restore the theater’s original appearance. The concrete panels and stone veneer were removed, exposing the front façade for the first time in decades. Though most of the original wood sash six-over-six windows were found to have survived underneath the concrete, they were replaced with Fibrex composite two-over-two sash windows. The round arched windows were also replaced with Fibrex composite versions. The two storefront entrances were replaced with large windows and exterior drywall. The deteriorating marquee was also replaced with a smaller one, more closely matching the original and leaving the rounded arch windows exposed. A few pieces of ornamental brick and masonry details that had broken were replaced with hand cast replicas.⁴

Some of the Redemption Church renovations, namely the replacement of the original windows with non-sympathetic materials and removal of the two storefront entrances, are detrimental to the Orpheum Theatre’s historic integrity. However, the removal of the concrete panels and stone veneer more than make up for these replacements. The original brick façade, corbeling, quoins, and other ornamentation are fully visible. The second and third story fenestration pattern is intact. The new marquee more closely resembles the size and scale of the original than previous iterations. Overall, the Orpheum Theatre has been reverted to a state where it possesses the integrity necessary to be a contributing resource to the Downtown Huntington Historic District.

With the Orpheum Theatre redesignated as contributing, the resource count for the Downtown Huntington Historic District’s 2007 boundary increase area is thus adjusted to be 54 contributing and 19 noncontributing resources.

³ Jean Tarbett Hardiman, “Downtown Huntington cinema closes doors,” *Huntington Herald-Dispatch*, November 4, 2011; Emma Satterfield, “The Orpheum Theatre (Cinema Theater,” *Clio: Your Guide to History*, November 8, 2019, accessed September 16, 2025, <https://theclio.com/entry/87948>.

⁴ Maggie Susa, “Redemption Church continues renovation on old theater,” *Huntington Herald-Dispatch*, December 6, 2024.; Chris Miller, email to Cody Straley, September 12, 2025.

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Bibliographic References

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"Fourth ave., looking west, [Huntington, W. Va.], ca. 1915." (1915). *0227: Marshall University Regional Photograph Collection*. 344. Accessed September 16, 2025. https://mds.marshall.edu/marshall_regional_photograph_collection/344

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Hastings, Merrill, "Orpheum Theatre & Elks Club Bldg. Huntington, Wva, 1937 Flood" (1937). *0099: Cabell-Wayne Historical Society Collection*. 423. Accessed September 16, 2025. https://mds.marshall.edu/cabell_wayne_hist_soc_collection/423.

Miller, Chris. Email to Cody Straley. September 12, 2025.

Satterfield, Emma. "The Orpheum Theatre (Cinema Theater)" *Clio: Your Guide to History*. November 8, 2019. Accessed February 4, 2025. <https://theclio.com/entry/87948>.

Stewart, H. A. "Dixie's Finest Theater." *Motography*, vol. 15, 817-818. April 8, 1916. https://books.google.com/books?id=a31JAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA817&lpg=PA817&dq=orpheum+theater+huntington+wv&source=bl&ots=iWBHXYy8rT&sig=ACfU3U0dad_UTDHZPv-vfJs301CfuAGqQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjep7fkx9j1AhVOd6wKHTQRCdk4ChDoATA_CegQICRAB#v=onepage&q=orpheum%20theater%20huntington%20wv&f=false.

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Susa, Maggie. "Redemption Church continues renovation on old theater." *Huntington Herald-Dispatch*. December 6, 2024.

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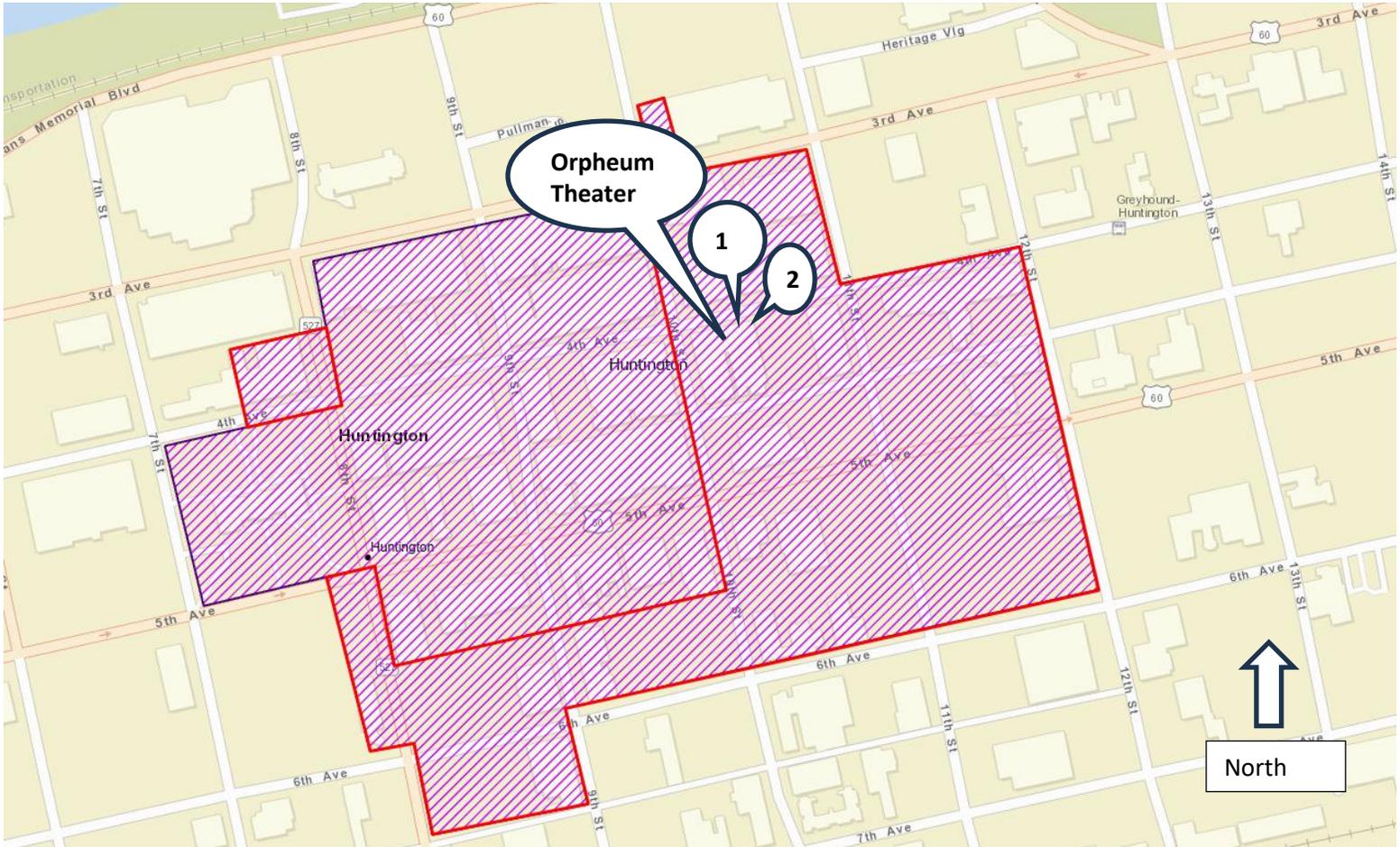


Figure 1 Map of Downtown Huntington Historic District and Photos Keyed

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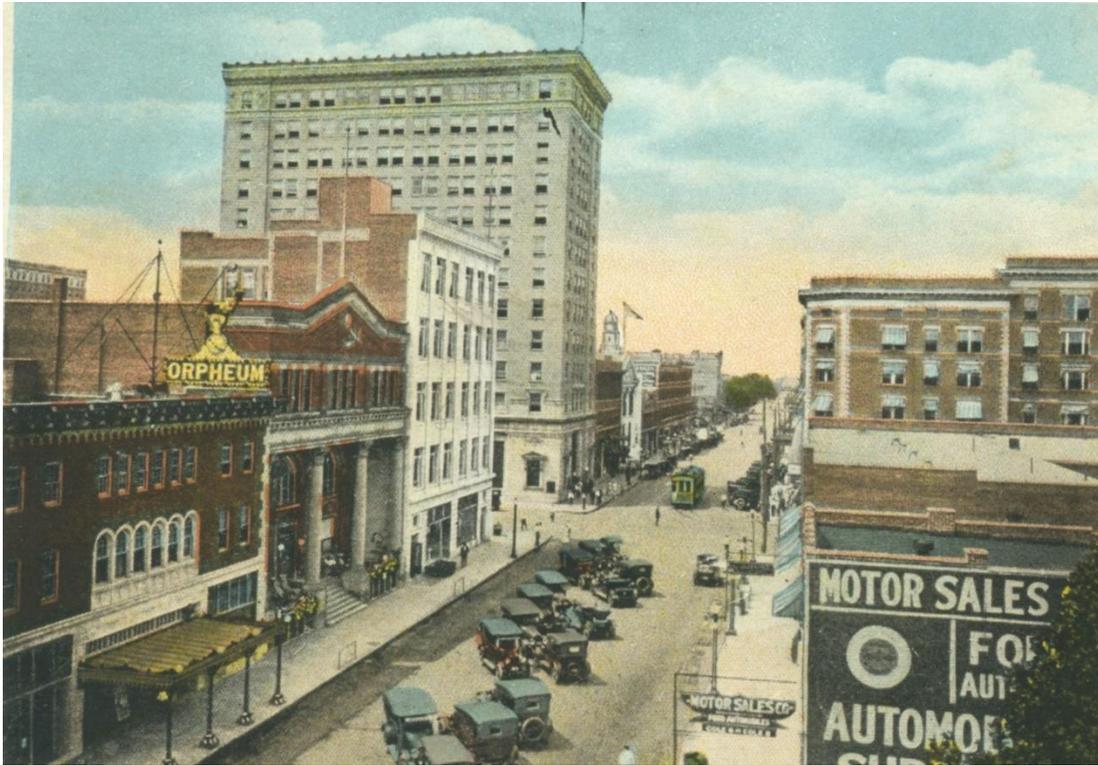


Figure 2 1910s Postcard of 4th Ave., showing Orpheum Theatre. Courtesy of Marshall University Special Collections.



Figure 3 1925 Photograph of Orpheum Theatre. Courtesy of Marshall University Special Collections.

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Figure 4 Orpheum Theatre during the Flood of 1937. Courtesy of Marshall University Special Collections.

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Figure 5 September 2019 Google Street View of Orpheum Theatre

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Orpheum Theatre / Redemption Church

City or Vicinity: Huntington

County: Cabell

State: WV

Photographer: Chris Miller

Date Photographed: September 12, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 2. WV_CabellCo_DowntownHuntingtonHistoricDistrictAD_0001
Front façade of theater, looking south.

2 of 2. WV_CabellCo_DowntownHuntingtonHistoricDistrictAD_0002
Front façade of theater, looking southwest.

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Photo 1 Front facade of theater, looking south

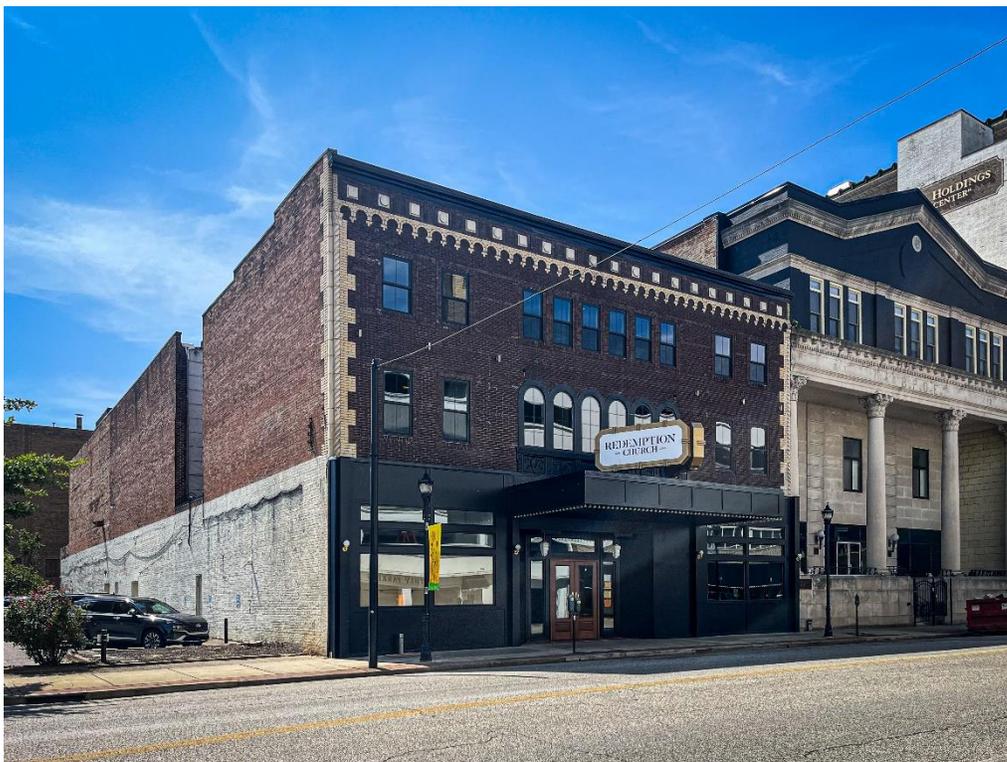


Photo 2 Front facade of theater, looking southwest