NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Saluda Theatre

other names/site number

## 2. Location

street & number 107 Law Range
city or town Saluda
state South Carolina code SC county Saluda
zip code 29138

not for publication ___
vicinity ___
code 081

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility 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. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally.
(___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mary W. Edmonds 11/2/93
Signature of certifying official Date

Mary W. Edmonds, Deputy SHPO, S.C. Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain):

Mary M. Hoy 12/13/93
for Signature of Keeper Date of Action

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- X private
- ___ public-local
- ___ public-State
- ___ public-Federal

**Category of Property**
(Check only one box)

- X building(s)
- ___ district
- ___ site
- ___ structure
- ___ object

**Number of Resources within Property**

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | | buildings |
| | | sites |
| | | structures |
| | | objects |
| 1 | 0 | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing
Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION Sub: Theater

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION Sub: Auditorium

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**
(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement/Art Deco

**Materials**
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
roof Asphalt
walls Brick
other

**Narrative Description**
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 8. Statement of Significance

**Applicable National Register Criteria**
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- X **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ___ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- X **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ___ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
____ B removed from its original location.
____ C a birthplace or a grave.
____ D a cemetery.
____ E a reconstructed building, object,or structure.
____ F a commemorative property.
____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**
(Enter categories from instructions)
Architecture
Entertainment/Recreation

**Period of Significance**
1936-1943

**Significant Dates**
1936

**Significant Person**
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**
N/A

**Architect/Builder**
Thompson, Charles B.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography**
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**
___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

**Primary Location of Additional Data**
X State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository: _____

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre

**UTM References**
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 17 | 428780 | 3762360 | 3 | | | |
| 2 | | | | 4 | | | |

___ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Watson Edmonds, with assistance by Dr. Ruby P. Herlong, Mary Parkman, and Lamar Lake, Saluda, S.C.

organization S.C. Department of Archives & History date 3 June 1993

street & number P.O. Box 11669 telephone (803) 734-8610

city or town Columbia state SC zip code 29211

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Saluda County Historical Society

street & number Box 22 telephone (803) 445-8550

city or town Saluda state SC zip code 29138

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

The Saluda Theatre is a two-story, stuccoed masonry building constructed in 1936 as a cinema. The theatre is prominently sited in downtown Saluda across the street from the courthouse square. The crisp, simple lines of the facade and the geometric designs of the interior wall finishes and lighting fixtures reveal the influence of the Art Deco style. The theatre is in good condition and has had very little alteration since its construction.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The facade (west elevation) of the theatre is broken into recessed and projecting flat planes. The first story of the facade is divided into three sections. The central section is recessed beneath the marquee. This recessed section contains a projecting glass ticket booth flanked by double doors leading to the main level of the theatre. The original wood doors have been replaced with heavy glass metal doors. The recessed section is flanked on each side by inset cases for posters. The outermost bays contain doors that open to stairs leading to the balcony.

The marquee extends over the sidewalk and features "SALUDA" in red neon letters over an undulating yellow neon band. The announcement board is framed in red neon, while paired green neon bands wrap the sides of the marquee.

The central section of the upper facade projects forward above the marquee. This section is defined by a green neon perimeter band and features a neon Indian profile complete with feathered headdress. Below the Indian, a recessed rectangular area (marked "billboard" on the original plans) is highlighted with red neon. The bays on each side of the central section also project forward, but not as far as the central section. The outermost bays do not project. The two bays on each side of the central bay contain single six-over-six windows. The upper facade is framed by pilasters at the corners of the building. A banded and corbelled cornice caps the facade and is accentuated with three contrasting bands.

The sides of the building were originally partially or wholly concealed by adjacent buildings. The left side (north elevation) is currently concealed by a two-story building; this elevation was originally flanked by a one-story building. The right side (south elevation) was originally flanked by a three-story building that has since been demolished. The top of this stuccoed elevation steps down from the facade. The brick elevation has no distinguishing features.

Most of the theatre is covered by a gable roof, which is obscured by the integrated parapet wall of the facade. A section to the rear of the gable portion is raised to accommodate the stage house.

The doors on either side on the ticket booth open into an entrance lobby. The lobby flows directly into an enclosed corridor, which is parallel to the street. This corridor opens into the auditorium and has openings to the ladies' and men's restrooms at each end.

The walls and ceiling of the auditorium are covered with pressed fiber tiles above a masonite wainscoting (the wainscoting may be a later addition). The tiles are patterned to give the illusion of ashlar stone work. Along the tops of the walls a scalloped decorative frieze pattern creates an implied cornice line. The scalloped pattern also decorates the balcony wall. Decorative tile work also defines the proscenium opening. Other distinguishing interior features include the original sconces and a cross-shaped ceiling fixture set within a star-shaped pattern in the ceiling tiles. The sconces and ceiling fixture are capable of multi-color illumination. The theatre also retains its original seats. The movie screen has been removed, and the orchestra pit, which was never used, has been filled with concrete.

The balcony, which was designed for the use of black patrons, has symmetrical side extensions. Access to the balcony bypassed the main lobby by way of a stair corridor that opened on the rear of the building, with a landing at the top of the stair opening into the north extension of the balcony. The separate ticket booth which was originally at this landing has since been removed.

The two doors on the outermost bays of the front of the building served as exit doors for the lobby. A projection booth at the rear of the balcony above the lobby is flanked by a small office and restroom.

The Saluda Theatre was designed by Charles B. Thompson and completed in 1936. The theatre reflects a period of motion picture theatre construction that swept the country in the 1920s and 1930s. Like most other movie theatres constructed during the second decade of the period, the building was influenced by the Art Deco style. The Saluda Theatre is significant in the area of Architecture as an unusually intact example of a small town theatre in the Art Deco style and in the area of Entertainment/Recreation as a focal point for entertainment in the town of Saluda and surrounding rural areas in the 1930s and 1940s.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Saluda Theatre was built for Neil Gunter Able in 1935-36 at a cost of about $25,000. Charles B. Thompson of Augusta, Georgia, was the architect, while Coke Bradley of Saluda was the contractor. Mrs. Able rented the building to Albert Burlewich, and the theatre opened on July 4, 1936 with a Shirley Temple film as its first showing. Burlewich operated the theatre until 1939 when Mrs. Able's grandson, James Robert Herlong, rented the building and began managing the theatre; Herlong later purchased the theatre in 1946. The Saluda Theatre was open for forty-five years, closing in October 1981.[1]

The theatre is one of a small number of motion picture theatres with Art Deco architectural influences which survive in South Carolina. Theatres built across the country in the 1920s drew on practically every historical architectural style from the Egyptian Revival to the Spanish Colonial as owners tried to outdo their competitors with larger and more elaborate designs. During the 1930s, however, the Great Depression, the acoustical requirements of theatres showing motion pictures with sound, and a probable reaction against the stylistic excesses of the 1920s led to the predominance of the Art Deco style for cinema construction.[2] Art Deco features of the Saluda Theatre include the simplicity of its lines and its rejection of historical styles, and the Art Deco influence is even more evident in the geometrical designs of the wall and ceiling tiles and the lighting fixtures on the interior. Other extant Art Deco-influenced theaters in the state include the Riviera Theatre in Charleston, the Palmetto Theatre in Hampton, and the Fox Theatre in Columbia. These theatres represent variations of the Art Deco style and a range of sophistication and detail. While the Saluda Theatre is one of the simplest of these buildings, it is also one of most intact examples of its type.

Although Saluda was the county seat and the largest town in Saluda County, its population was only about 1,500 when the Saluda Theatre opened in 1936.[3] The theatre was a principal source of entertainment in Saluda and the surrounding rural area in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The theatre was open every night except Sunday and held regular matinees, with occasional promotional visits by movie stars such as William Lundigan, Kathleen Crowley, Douglas Morrow, Gabby Hayes, and Lash LaRue. According to long-time theatre manager James Robert Herlong, people stood in line for a block to get into the theatre on Wednesday nights, which were promoted as "Bank Nights," with each ticket holder eligible

to win cash prizes. On Friday and Saturday nights there were no empty parking spaces in Saluda because of the large crowds who filled the theatre.[4]

In 1987 the theatre was purchased by the Saluda County Council and donated to the Saluda County Historical Society, which has renovated it and uses it for dramatic presentations, music recitals, political rallies, and other community activities.[5]

NOTES

1. Interview with James Robert Herlong, Saluda, S.C., Octobert 1984; Architectural Plans for the Saluda Theatre, 13 March 1936, Personal Files of Lois Herlong, Saluda, S.C.; Deed Book 31, p. 186, Register of Mesne Conveyance, Saluda County Courthouse, Saluda, S.C.

2. David B. Schneider, "The Historic Motion Picture Theatre in America: History, Significance, and Future Potentials," M.A. thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 1981; David Naylor, Great American Movie Theaters (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1987), pp. 15-27; Alastair Duncan, American Art Deco (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986), pp. 200-203.

3. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population, 3:318; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population, 2:420.

4. Interview with James Robert Herlong, Saluda, S.C., October 1984.

5. Deed Book 133, pp. 226-28, 246-48, Register of Mesne Conveyance, Saluda County Courthouse, Saluda, S.C.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Duncan, Alastair. American Art Deco. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986.

Herlong, James Robert. Interview, Saluda, S.C., October 1984.

Naylor, David. Great American Movie Theaters. Washington: Preservation Press, 1987.

Saluda, S.C. Personal Files of Lois Herlong.

Saluda, S.C. Register of Mesne Conveyance, Saluda County Courthouse.

Schneider, David B. "The Historic Motion Picture Theatre in America: History, Significance, and Future Potentials." M.A. thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 1981.

U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population. Volume 3.

U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population. Volume 2.

## Verbal Boundary Description

The lot in the Town and County of Saluda, S.C., bounded on the North by lands formerly belonging to J.A. Nichols, now Long for 90 feet; East by Rudolph Street for a total of 36 feet, more or less; South by lands formerly of Able and known as the Able Building lot for 90 feet, more or less; and West for a total of 36 feet, more or less, by street known as Law Range.

## Boundary Justification

The nominated property is restricted to the footprint of the Saluda Theatre.

The following information is the same for each of the photographs:

Name of property: Saluda Theatre
Location of property: Saluda County, South Carolina
Photographer: Tom Shaw, S.C. Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.
Location of negative: S.C. Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.
Date of photograph: June 1993

1) Facade (East elevation)

2) Facade detail, showing marquee and Indian profile

3) Left front oblique view

4) Right (South) elevation

5) Left (North) and Rear (West) elevations