

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

| |
|-------------------|
| For HCRS use only |
| received |
| date entered |

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

1. Name

historic WARNER THEATER

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 811 State Street ___ not for publication

city, town Erie ___ vicinity of congressional district 24th

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Erie code 049

3. Classification

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
| ___ district | <u>X</u> public | <u>X</u> occupied | ___ agriculture |
| <u>X</u> building(s) | ___ private | ___ unoccupied | ___ commercial |
| ___ structure | ___ both | ___ work in progress | ___ educational |
| ___ site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <u>X</u> entertainment |
| ___ object | ___ in process | <u>X</u> yes: restricted | ___ government |
| | ___ being considered | ___ yes: unrestricted | ___ industrial |
| | | ___ no | ___ military |
| | | | ___ museum |
| | | | ___ park |
| | | | ___ private residence |
| | | | ___ religious |
| | | | ___ scientific |
| | | | ___ transportation |
| | | | ___ other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Dept. of General Services)

street & number Bureau of Real Estate, Room 503, North Office Building

city, town Harrisburg ___ vicinity of state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Erie County Courthouse

street & number 140 West 6th Street

city, town Erie state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pennsylvania Inventory
of Historic Places

has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___ no

date 4-1-81 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

7. Description

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Warner Theatre, completed in 1930, is a 2,500 seat motion picture theatre built with an opulence then characteristic of the Warner Brothers Company. It was designed by Rapp and Rapp at a cost of \$1,500,000, including an acre of pure gold and silver leaf. It is a provincial masterpiece of its genre.

Architecturally, the Warner might be classified as French-Renaissance in style, yet incorporating the Art Deco influences of its period. The theatre facade is articulated in brick and ornamental terra cotta spandrel panels, with a vertical "Warner" sign and a marquee extending over the ticket booth. Both the free-standing booth and the five entry doors are solid bronze with glass inserts.

Off of the ticket lobby are reserved seat booths and administrative offices. The ticket lobby leads to the grand lobby, 130 ft. long with a 33 ft. ceiling. This lobby is decorated with ornate gold and silver leaf swirls and filigree. A solid cast bronze and leaded glass chandelier of art deco design hangs from the ceiling. (All of the lighting fixtures in the theatre were bronze and leaded glass, designed by the architects.) The lobby has a terrazzo floor, mammoth arches, vaults, and columns, gold-backed mirrors, and a grand staircase with ornamental brass railings which leads to balcony seating for 730 and the projection room.

The grand lobby leads into the orchestre foyer, the walls of which feature two Batchelder Founts, stylized plaster figures in shadow boxes, and wall mosaics. This foyer is furnished with "rococo" pieces and gilt-framed paintings. Elaborate Gentlemen and Ladies' suites are accessible from it.

The 1,780 seat auditorium (orchestra - 122'x143') itself displays an Egyptian motif with art deco swirls. From the gold-leaf ceiling hang two chandeliers, and a light clove in the domed portion encircles a plaster grille. Four smaller light fixtures hang from side walls by cast bronze scones. The luxurious wall coverings are framed by gold-leaf trim. Illuminated bronze markers indicate exits. An elaborately framed proscenium opens to the orchestra pit and stage. Backstage there are rooms for dressing, rehearsal and storage.

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 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 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 1930 **Builder/Architect** C.W. & George Rapp, Architect
George A. Fuller Co., Builder

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Warner Theatre is one of the most outstanding buildings in Erie. Built by the Pa. Theatre Company, a subsidiary of Warner Brothers, it was designed by Rapp and Rapp, a pre-eminent firm in the area of movie palace design.

In its heyday, the Warner served as an entertainment center, featuring both live performances and films. It also served as district headquarters in the Warner Brothers theatrical empire. It was and remains the largest theatre of its kind in northwestern Pennsylvania and the only building in the elaborate French-Renaissance/Art Deco styling in the region.

C. W. and George Rapp headed the Chicago firm that designed the Warner. They are acknowledged to be among the top three architects of American movie palaces, the others being John Eberson and Thomas W. Lamb. They began their theatre design career in 1915 with the Central Park in Chicago, and later the Chicago Oriental. Their other masterpieces, c. 1921-1931 include the Ambassador in St. Louis, the Paramount in New York, the Shea in Buffalo, and the Warner in Erie.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Life Magazine, Feb. 1972; Stylized figure was featured.

Marquee Magazine, Warner Theater was cited as a premier example of a Provincial Motion Picture Palace.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .75

Quadrangle name Erie North

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

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| 17 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 63 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 64 | 0 | 50 |
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| | | | |
| | | | |

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jay M. Armbruster & John Evans

Erie Civic Center Authority

organization Heidt, Evans & Salata, Architects date 11/6/80

street & number 811 State Street telephone 814-452-4857

city or town Erie state Pennsylvania 16512

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Larry E. Tise, Executive Director

title Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission date 2/20/82

For HCRS use only

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

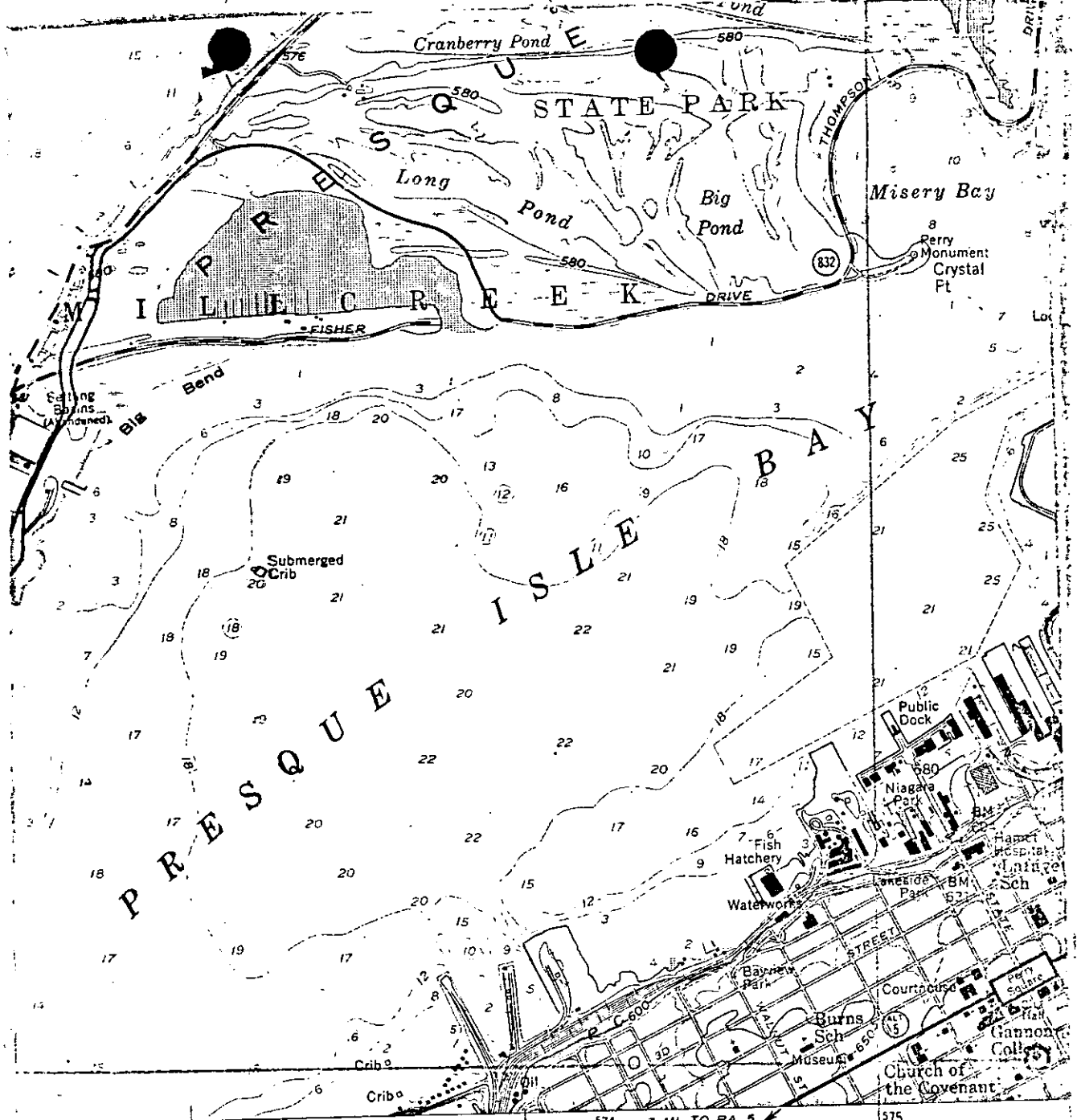
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

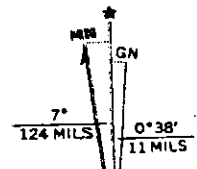
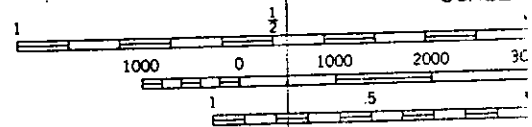
date

Chief of Registration



572 7'30" 573 574 7 MI. TO PA. 5 575

SCALE



UTM GRID AND 1975 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

CONTOUR INTERVAL NATIONAL GEODETIC VE. DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN F

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY. A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS IS AVAILABLE.

Changes shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the Department of Pennsylvania agencies from aerial photographs taken in 1969 and 1975. This information not field checked. Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas.