United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

_X_ New Submission ___ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic Movie Theaters of Iowa

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Historical Development of Iowa Movie Theaters 1880-1975

C. Form Prepared by

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. [ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature and title of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper Date

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF IOWA MOVIE THEATERS: 1880 – 1975

INTRODUCTION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMERCIAL AMERICAN MOTION PICTURE EXHIBITION

One hundred plus years' history of motion picture exhibition in the United States involves industrial, social, technological, commercial, and artistic trends during decisive turning points in the history of theatrical exhibition.[1] Movies are significant cultural artifacts that provide insight into American cultural and social history.[2]

> *A mixture of art, business, and popular entertainment, the movies provide a host of insights into Americans' shifting ideals, fantasies, and preoccupations. Cultural historians analyze movies as sociological documents that record the look and mood of particular historical settings; as ideological constructs that advance particular political or moral values or myths; as psychological texts that speak to individual and social anxieties and tensions; as cultural documents that present particular images of gender, ethnicity, class romance, and violence; and as visual texts that offer complex levels of meaning and seeing.*[3]

As we acknowledge movies as a significant cultural phenomena, or even engage in nostalgia about certain eras, such as "golden" years of cinema from the 1920s through the 1950s,[4] it is important to remember in the establishment of the important historical contexts relating to the commercial exhibition of movie theaters, that the movie theater was the point of contact between the consumer (the audience) and the product (the movie). Like other forms of popular entertainment in the United States, including the State of Iowa, the exhibition of movies was and is, fundamentally, a commercial enterprise which created and disseminated profit. Movie theaters, today and in the past, are links in the chain of movie production, distribution, and exhibition that reached out from the United States to encircle the globe.

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[1] Ross Melnick and Andreas Fuchs, *Cinema Treasures: A New Look at Classic Movie Theaters* (St. Paul MN: MBI Publishing Company, 2004), 15.
[2] "Hollywood as History," *Digital History*, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/hollywood_history.cfm (accessed September 1, 2011).
[3] Ibid.
[4] Michal Putnam, *Silent Screens: The Decline and Transformation of the American Movie* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 3.

The advent of the local movie theater in the United States was the beginning of the sharing of common theatrical and other visual experiences on a scale that never existed before. The impact of 10,000 movie theaters in 1910 was unprecedented in entertainment history of the nation. Augmenting the movie theater in the nascent homogenization of entertainment at this time was the radio, an instrument for popular broadcasting that produced the simultaneous national distribution of the same music, same comedy, same sporting events, political speeches, news, and news commentary.[5] By 1930, 110 million Americans went to the movies weekly.[6] Each performance exposed all classes of the public to common standards of dress, clothing, manners, speech, and, even, architecture.[7] Together, the radio and the movies during the first half of the twentieth century assumed the role of the dominant shapers of mass culture, providing Americans of all classes with similar information, ideas, and interests.[8] This symbiotic relationship would, in the post-World War II period, incorporate the television.

Although of national and international scope, the economic, cultural, and entertainment importance of movies at the local and state level in Iowa is significant. Local economies realized distinct benefits from the activities of small movie houses, large movie palaces, drive-in theaters, and multiplexes. The basis of their commercial importance was the provision of an entertainment experience to the locality or market and purchasing the goods and services necessary to exhibition of movies (such as films, advertising, concession items, electrical repairs).[9] Major benefits to the commerce of the village, neighborhood, town, or city included jobs associated with the management of the theater as well as contributing to employment related to the services and goods utilized by the theater's operation. The movie theater, as all small businesses, contributed to all local and state taxes. Moreover, the presence of a movie theater in a town, neighborhood, or downtown commercial center added not only to the commercial revenues from local residents, it also brought income from individuals traveling to the motion picture theater from the surrounding locality who also frequently purchased other goods and services in nearby retail stores.

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[5] John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, *The Architecture of America: A Social and Cultural History* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1961), 213.

[6] The U.S. population at this time was 123,076,741.

[7] Burchard and Bush-Brown, 325.

[8] Frederick Lewis Allen, *The Big Change: America Transforms Itself, 1900 -1950* (New York: Harper & Row, 1952), 20.

[9] While most of the money taken in ticket sales went back to the movie studio, the concessions sold, remaining percentage of box office receipts and rental of facilities all contributed to the movie theaters' income stream.

MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM: ASSOCIATIONS AND PROPERTY TYPES

This Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) examines the commercial, architectural, and social history of "mainstream" commercial motion picture distribution and exhibition in the State of Iowa. Although much of the financial and distribution structure for exhibition of movies occurred within national contexts, the method of distribution, marketing, and exhibition also reacted to local and state-wide conditions and practices within that national context. Iowa's movie theaters are significant for their associations relating to National Register Criterion A in the areas of Entertainment/Recreation, Performing Arts, Commerce, Ethnic History, and Social History. Some movie theaters meet National Register Criterion B for their associations with individuals who made important and specific contributions to the exhibition of movies in a local community or in the State of Iowa. Many Iowa theaters also have significant associations under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. A number of sub-contexts relating to the history of the nation and the state document these associations with the historic context of this MPDF, "Historic Development of Iowa Movie Theaters**:** 1880 – 1975." They are:

- "Historic Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries in Iowa: 1880 – 1917"
- "Rise of the Motion Picture: 1900 – 1930**"**
- "State-wide Impact of Era of Centralization and Domination of Movie Theater Chains: 1920 – 1948"
- "Movie Theater Development in Iowa in the Great Depression and the War Years: 1930 – 1946"
- "Iowa Movie Theaters in the Post-World War II Period and Era of Suburbanization: 1946 – 1975"
- "Evolution of Movie Theater Design in Iowa: 1900 – 1975"

These historic sub-contexts include three elements:[10] 1) the general impact of historical themes, trends, or patterns specific to the commercial distribution and exhibition of movies in 2) a state-wide geographical area, during 3) a chronological period dating from 1880 to 1975. Iowa theaters associated with these national, regional, and state contexts, illustrate the types of buildings erected or converted to house the commercial exhibition of motion pictures. These functional property types evolved to accommodate changing forms of entertainment and motion picture technology. As discussed in greater detail in Section

[10] *Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms; Part B: How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form* (Revised) (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 1999), 3.

F of this document, seven functional property types represent the development of Iowa movie theaters that have associations with the historic context "Historic Development of Movie Theaters in Iowa 1880 – 1975." Five of these property types have associations with live performing arts in association with the commercial exhibition of moving pictures. These property types are (1) Community Halls, (2) Opera House Movie Theaters, (3) Conversion Theaters, (4) Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses, and (5) Movie Palaces. Two have exclusive associations with the commercial exhibition of motion pictures only and are: (6) Drive-in Movie Theaters and (7) Multiplex Movie Theaters.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR IOWA MOVIE THEATER HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Geographical Environment

The physical environment of Iowa and its evolution during the twentieth century directly affected the changes in exhibition of commercial movies in the state. Major factors affecting movie theater locations included geographical development patterns and population distribution. The evolution of transportation networks determined economic development patterns in general and specifically, theater locations influenced by the distribution patterns of films to local exhibition venues.

The development patterns of communities, in particular, the economic impact of their population and the population of surrounding farms and mining locations affected the locational patterns of movie theaters in the twentieth century. Also integral in the geographic and chronological development patterns of movie theaters was the railroad system, and later, highway and road systems that affected the distribution of films from regional film exchanges to their clientele throughout the state. In addition, the highway and road system, particularly after World War II, affected growth patterns that determined geographic movie attendance patterns.

The State of Iowa is an area of rich, rolling plains, interrupted by rivers. It is 200 miles long and 310 miles wide. Its major rivers include the Cedar, Des Moines, Iowa, the Mississippi (which separates it on the east from Wisconsin and Illinois), and the Missouri and the Big Sioux Rivers (that separate it on the west from Nebraska and South Dakota). Except for the hills in Northeast Iowa, the steep bluffs on the banks of the Mississippi River, and the rounded bluffs along the Missouri River, the terrain is low and gently sloping fertile topsoil. Des Moines is the state capital and largest city. Other major cities in the twentieth century were Cedar Rapids, Davenport, and Sioux City.

Twentieth Century Economic Development Patterns

Today, as in the past, Iowa's rich soils yield corn and other grains in tremendous quantities, and also support a livestock industry of cattle and corn-fed hogs. The state's chief industry was in the twentieth century food processing. Other manufactured goods included machinery, tires, appliances, electronic equipment and chemicals. A small amount of mineral production included cement, stone, sand, gravel and gypsum.

Beginning in the 1830s, Euro-American settlers established communities in the Iowa Territory. By 1860, farms and towns occupied almost all of the State of Iowa except in the Northwest. The Civil War greatly increased the demand for crops and livestock in Iowa. By the 1880s, farmers began to diversify their production and different regions of the state developed specialties.

America's participation in World War I increased the market demand for Iowa's agricultural products. However, after the war in the early 1920s, many farmers had difficulty making the payment on loans they secured during the boom years of the war. These hardships carried over into the 1930s as they faced the extremely low farm prices during the Great Depression. Iowa farmers did not fully recover from the hard times until World War II when the demand for agricultural products by the military once again resulted in higher farm commodity prices.

After World War II, Iowans experienced considerable economic change. Industrial production became a larger part of the state's economy as a result of the war and the national postwar economic boom. Moreover, after almost a hundred years of diversified farming, farm operations began to specialize in the 1950s. The gradual but persistent industrialization of agriculture and the emergence of centralized commodities markets in the first half of the twentieth century as well as the exodus of farmers during the Great Depression stimulated the growth of larger farms and, by the end of the twentieth century, the decline of the small family farm. These changes dramatically affected the rural nature of agricultural market centers and produced increasing population growth in large towns and cities of the state. These changes, in turn, contributed to the changes in movie exhibition, importantly, at a time when there were significant technological changes in movies.

Transportation Networks

Expansion of Iowa's Railroad Freight System

Railroads were the key to the growth and success of towns and cities in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. They carried the bounty of the state's farms and coal mines to cities within and outside the state. They transported settlers to new homes and brought manufactured items such as farm implements and ready-made clothes to the rural railroad market centers of Iowa. They also were the primary carrier for distribution of movies throughout the state until the advent of a dependable system of all-weather roads after the Great Depression.

Iowa's railroad network officially began in 1856 when Congress gave public land in the state to four railroad companies to build four east-to-west lines. At this time, only one railroad line reached as far west as the state capital at the time, Iowa City. In 1867, the first railroad crossed the state. During the remainder of the nineteenth century, small railroad companies quickly linked their trackage to the towns and cities of Iowa with main-line railroad tracks that crossed the state. Sparsely settled areas filled with people as new railroad lines arrived; the early settlements the railroads bypassed remained small or disappeared. By 1900, the state's basic railroad network was, for the most part, in place.[11]

By the second decade of the twentieth century, however, Iowa rail mileage dropped as railroads struggled to make money partly because of overbuilding of the system. Competition, mergers, and bankruptcies also contributed to the operation of fewer rail miles. It was not until the 1930s and 1940s when the diesel-powered lightweight streamlined passenger train made significant profits for the railroads.

Rail transport served as the primary carrier of goods in the state until well into the twentieth century. Access to film exchanges and the shipping of films to movie theaters throughout the state depended heavily on convenient daily access to railroad freight depots.

Motor Vehicle Use and State Road System Development

It was not until after the end of World War I that the automobile came of age,[12] and it was during the 1920s that the impact of the increased use of automobiles was felt most sharply in Iowa. The centralization of responsibility for the state's road system, which began in 1884, did not become complete

[11] Marlin R. Ingalls, "Iowa's Historic Automobile Roads: A National Register Study of Pre-1948 Arterial Highways" (University of Iowa Highway Archaeology Program, 2009), 26. http://publications.iowa.gov/9417/1/IowaHistoricRoads.pdf (accessed October 10, 2010).

[12] Allen, *The Big Change: America Transforms Itself, 1900 -1950*, 108.

until 1929.[13] At the end of World War I, the state road system was based on section and township lines. In 1920, there was an average of one car for every fourteen people in the United States. In Iowa at this time there was one car for every six people.[14] During the 1920s, the state's primary road building and improvement goal was to connect the state capital with the county seats and the county seats to each other.

In assessing the impact of these conditions on movie film distribution and theater attendance patterns in a largely rural state, it is important to note that the early and considerable percentage of motor vehicles owned by farmers in the 1920s was initially due to their utilitarian use on the farm itself, and the easy temporary adaptation of the vehicle motor and mechanical parts for use to power specific agricultural tasks. As noted in the study, *Transportation in Iowa, A Historical Summary* by William H. Thompson, at this time a very high percentage of automobile traffic occurred only on paved highways. Getting the automobile from farm to town and town to county seat on an efficient network of all-weather roads was, for some, a major challenge. Thus, in the mid-1920s, dependable distribution of film and convenient patron travel to multiple venues for movies was limited. It required easy motor vehicle access to the state's then paved highways and continued use of rail freight which serviced all of the post-offices and freight centers in the state.

Securing all-weather roads occurred at a slower pace in the state's road building efforts than establishing new gravel roads and maintaining the existing infrastructure. In 1904, less than two percent of the state's roads were improved with gravel or broken stone, giving the state the reputation of one of the worst "mud road" states in the nation.[15] At the end of World War I, the demand for all-weather hard surface roads was significant. A 1918 editorial in the *Iowan Magazine* indicated there were 220,000 farms in Iowa and 194,000 automobiles. Between farm and market place the "highways" were mud or dust and full of ruts, holes and bumps, which sometimes obstructed passage altogether.[16] Primary road improvements thus started far behind vehicle needs and never really caught up with demand.[17]

The construction and/or paving of primary roads in Iowa began in the 1920s, when comparatively few buses or freight trucks were on the roads. By 1930, the number of vehicles using primary roads doubled, and bus and truck traffic made up a significant percentage of highway use. In the late 1920s, increased

[13] Ingalls, 23.
[14] "Motor Vehicle Registration Licenses and Revenues in 1919," *Engineering and Contracting Roads and Streets*, 1 (September 1920), 59.
[15] Ingalls, 26.
[16] Ibid., 29.
[17] Ibid., 37-38.

funds from county bond sales accelerated the paving of primary roads and stub roads (roads that ran only a short distance from a primary road to a town center), reaching a peak year in 1930. Depleted funds and the economic depression in the early 1930s sharply reduced the paving of primary roads. The war curtailed highway construction from 1942 to 1945. Therefore, it was not until the post-World War II years that all-weather roads connected the towns of Iowa and its primary roads became completely paved.

After 1930, movie theater operators of single venues or of multiple movie houses in different communities outside of large cities relied on both train and highway for access to film exchanges for rental of movie films and advertising posters, to wholesale dealers in concession supplies, and to purveyors of movie house equipment. Before World War II, for the rural movie-goer, travel by car to the nearest movie theater usually required good weather or easy access to a paved highway. Travel beyond the nearest movie theater to a town further away did not occur in great numbers until after World War II.[18] Of note is the correlation between the growing post-war paved primary road system and growth of the drive-in movie theaters located on open land at the outskirts of Iowa's cities and rural market centers.

Electric Interurban Lines

In Iowa, as in other states, interurban electric rail lines operated in most large cities by the 1920s. Providing both freight and passenger services, they connected neighborhoods within the city and the larger area between communities. Land adjacent to the routes of these interurban lines became prime locations for the location of movie theaters.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT VENUES IN THE LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES IN IOWA: 1880 – 1915

ENTERTAINMENT VENUES: FROM COMMUNITY HALL TO OPERA HOUSE TO MOTION PICTURE THEATER

According to the estimate by critic William Winter in 1880, ". . . there were approximately five thousand theaters in 3,500 cities and towns across America."[19] The practices and processes that grew out of local performing arts venues in Iowa and the Midwest in the nineteenth century, presaged distribution and

[18] Factors other than all-weather roads affecting the radius of movie-going activities from the small town movie theater in rural agricultural areas were: in the Great Depression, financial; during World War II, gas rationing.

[19] Mary C. Henderson, "Scenography, Stagecraft, and Architecture," in *The Cambridge History of American Theatre, Volume 2, 1870-1945*, ed. Don B. Wolmeth and Christopher Bigsby (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 487.

exhibition practices adapted by the national, and state-wide motion picture industry in the first half of the twentieth century. In addition, the theatrical venues of the nineteenth century directly influenced the design of the state's first function-specific movie theaters.

The initial development period of the movie theater business in Iowa roughly paralleled the growth patterns of the state and shares settlement and growth patterns of communities affected by the growth of the railroad in the state, particularly the rapid expansion of the nation's railroad network that occurred in the 1870s and 1880s[20] and after the maturity of the network of railroad lines at the turn-of-the-twentieth century in Iowa. In the initial stage of Iowa's development as settlement progressed west and north across the state, settlers established new communities and older villages became towns.[21]

In newly forming communities, settlers and investors first built homes, business houses, hotels, churches, and schools. During this initial period of development, each town also established a place of public assembly, often using any available room in a commercial building that provided sufficient space for courtrooms, town meetings, and live entertainment. Thus, the earliest public entertainment facilities in Iowa were community spaces that housed both private and commercially sponsored public performances. This pattern of use of the community hall for public entertainment continued into the twentieth century with the arrival of moving pictures to rural market centers. In the state's more established communities, entrepreneurs constructed theater buildings generally referred to as "opera houses."[22]

The distinction between community hall and opera house in Iowa is blurred. In some towns what were often called "opera houses" were not strictly theaters, but community assembly rooms associated with entertainment in general. In these venues, seats could be pushed against the walls or piled on the stage for dances, athletic contests, roller-skating (a fad beginning in the 1880s), and other activities. Most featured little more than open plans, flat floors, moveable seating, a stage, a few dressing rooms, and several sets of scenery.[23] Both the community hall and opera house theater buildings would function as early venues for the exhibition of moving pictures.

The earliest of what could be called purpose-built opera house theatrical venues in the Midwest, including Iowa, were typically two- or three-story wood frame or brick structures with commercial spaces or local

[20] Tracy Cunning, "Footlights in Farm Country: Iowa Opera Houses 1835-1940" (National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form) (PHR Associates, Tempe, Arizona, March 5, 1993), E-1.
[21] Ibid., E-3.
[22] Lewis Atherton, *Main Street on the Middle Border* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954), xvi, 136.
[23] Cunning, E-4.

government offices on the first floor and an auditorium and permanent seating on the upper floor(s).[24] By the late nineteenth century in county seats and cities, traveling troupes were more likely to perform in auditoria with raked floors, balconies, fixed seating, and stages with a variety of scenery alternatives. Seating capacity reflected both the community and the surrounding rural population and ranged from accommodating fairly small audiences to as many as 600 to 900 patrons. Interior and exterior stylistic design and ornamentation reflected the size of the community, its economic circumstances, and popular architectural styles at the time of construction.

Whether “community hall” or “opera house,” these venues hosted community gatherings, lectures, meetings, educational activities, musical concerts, minstrel shows, variety performances, and local talent productions. They all featured an interior design that influenced the purpose-built movie theater of the early twentieth century.

Between 1880 and the 1930s, a high percentage of the nation’s smaller theater companies toured the Midwest.[25] It was into these venues in the 1890s, that the novelty acts preceding the main performance introduced the magic lantern show, the precursor of the moving picture. The magic-lantern projector show enjoyed its heyday at the end of the nineteenth century. Those used in large halls were huge double-lens machines lit with "limelight” created when oxygen and hydrogen were squirted on a piece of limestone; this created incandescent gases that produced a light as powerful as a modern movie projector. The lantern projected hand-colored slides on a full-sized screen every thirty seconds or so, many creating an animated effect or special effects and illustrated stories, songs, and comedy, just as the movies would later provide. As the slides were projected in a magic-lantern show, a live showman and musician provided the "soundtrack," and the audience joined in creating sound effects, playing horns and tambourines, and clapping, cheering, and booing, just as in the melodramatic theater of the day. At this time the theatrical circuits introduced some of the first moving picture shows in the state, a practice that continued with the vaudeville circuit into the 1930s in Iowa.

[24] Douglas McDermott, "The Development of Theatre on the American Frontier, 1750-1890," in *Theatre Survey* 19, no. 1 (May 1978): 63-78.
[25] Cunning, E-7.

FROM NINETEENTH CENTURY IOWA THEATER HOUSE AND OPERA HOUSE TO EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY MOVIE THEATER

The opera house theater building type heavily influenced the design of movie theaters in Iowa as in other states. Moreover, Iowa's opera houses, in all their sizes and architectural variations, also served as motion picture exhibition venues long after light opera and dramatic presentations ceased and well into the 1930s.

Opera house design came from Italy to the United States in the eighteenth century. The design of the traditional European opera house included a U-shaped auditorium with the length of the sides determining the audience capacity. Around this "U" are tiers of balconies, and often, nearer the stage, are boxes (small partitioned sections of a balcony). During the late nineteenth century, opera houses in America generally featured an orchestra pit in front of the stage where musicians sat at a level below the audience, so that the music would not overwhelm the singing voices. By this time, theaters catered to the middle class with ground floor seating called the *parquet* and a balcony suitable for fashionable and respectable middle-class women. If present, a second balcony served the working class and, in some theaters and in a designated area, African Americans.[26] In the early decades of the twentieth century in Iowa, many opera house owners eliminated the second balcony due to lack of economic profit or removed balconies or portions thereof, to accommodate motion picture projection booths.

According to Reynolds Keith Allen's dissertation, "Nineteenth Century Theater Structures in Iowa and Nebraska 1857-1900," theater halls and opera houses erected in Iowa prior to 1900 exhibited a wide variety of designs. It is important to understand these buildings as historic movie theater property types and sub-types because many became venues for vaudeville (which included motion picture shows) as well as conversion movie theaters, particularly after being rewired for sound.

The theater hall buildings and opera houses erected in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Iowa that later functioned as conversion movie houses reflected certain common trends. A survey of these buildings indicated upper floor theater locations with a general trend, beginning in the late nineteenth century, toward ground floor theaters (third floor auditoria generally dated to between the 1830s and 1880). Commercial blocks usually housed the second floor theaters until after 1910, when these venues began to occur on the ground floor within a commercial block or the construction of a free-standing opera house became common.[27]

[26] Ibid., E-10.
[27] Ibid., F-31.

By the late nineteenth century, the buildings often designated by their owners as "opera houses" reflected the specific use of these buildings for dramatic presentations. Based on analysis of theater design in the towns and cities located along the four major railroad lines operating in Iowa between 1850 and 1900, Allen developed a hierarchy of the theatrical venues in Iowa: the utility hall, the opera hall and the opera house. (All of these different theatrical venue types eventually functioned as movie theaters.) When applied to later analysis of communities throughout Iowa, it appears that there was considerable overlap among Allen's classifications as well as new documentation that a linear evolution from simple hall to the complex opera house did not occur in all communities. Each of the types continued to appear in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

What is also very clear is that there was a general trend toward specialized theaters. As a result, between the 1830s and the 1930s, theatrical and variety show performance venues can be classified as general "utility hall" theater buildings and the "grand opera house" building. These two classifications had distinctly different characteristics; however, the "opera hall" building incorporated characteristics of each of the aforementioned theater building types.[28] Many variations of these three prototypes found in Iowa carried over in the design of new motion picture theaters or conversion into movie theaters before World War II.

The Utility or General Hall Theater Building in Iowa

The Utility or General Hall Theater Building, erected between 1835 and 1940 in Iowa, was commonly a second floor auditorium incorporated into a commercial block and featured a flat floor, sometimes combined with tiered balcony sections. They had moveable seating and little interior decoration. Seating capacity varied from 150 to 600 or more. The size of the building dictated the size of the stage. Audience seating was benches (with or without backs), armless wood chairs, or wood folding chairs. Architectural styling varied from simple designs to vernacular adaptations of popular styles of the period of construction, such as the Italianate and Romanesque styles.

[28] Ibid., F-33 through F-35. To avoid confusion as to the general term "opera house," the Multiple Property Documentation Form assigns these specific terms to delineate the types of live performance opera house theater buildings in Iowa erected between 1835 and 1940, which may or may not have exhibited motion pictures.

Grand Opera House Theater Buildings in Iowa

At the other end of the spectrum, the grand opera house building was a true theater. It first appeared in Iowa near the end of the nineteenth century and became common after 1910. These buildings were commonly free-standing with a lobby providing egress to the rear of a ground-floor auditorium seating from 500 to 2,000. The opera house featured a raked floor, fixed seats, balcony(s) with box seats, an orchestra pit, and multiple exits.[29] Architectural styling was often exuberant with liberal use of ornamentation. Many owners of these theater buildings in Iowa converted them into movie theaters after the feature film arrived shortly before World War I, and continued to renovate these buildings for movies into the 1930s.

Opera Hall Theater Buildings in Iowa

Smaller than the Grand Opera House Theater and larger than the Utility/General Hall Theater, Opera Hall Theater buildings in Iowa incorporated basic features related to specific theater functions. It is estimated that the period when they were built in greatest number in Iowa was between c.1880 and c.1910. They were commonly second floor auditoria located within commercial buildings and featured a lobby area opening into the rear of the auditorium. They featured a ticket booth or small ticket windows at the foot of the stairs and modest interior decoration. Stages were larger than those in the Utility Hall Theater. Floors were flat, tiered or raked, and seating was moveable, fixed, or a combination of both. This treatment presaged the placement of Movie Palaces and smaller motion picture theaters in large commercial blocks.

THE ECONOMICS OF LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY LIVE AND MOVIE THEATER OPERATION

In Iowa, as in neighboring states, many of the activities associated with doing business on a live theater traveling circuit established precedents for the early distribution and exhibition of movies throughout the state. In the live theater, the traveling troupe's business manager initially established a relationship and contract with the local exhibition venue which would be rented; each party either split the gross receipts for each performance or the performing company rented the hall or opera house for a given number of performances. The business manager or a "front man," often referred to as the advance man, preceded the company's arrival in each town and made final arrangements with the opera house manager or owner of a community hall or lodge room, handled the final details of lodging arrangements for the group, placed

[29] Ibid., F-34.

advertisements in the local newspaper(s) and arranged for the printing of handbills to be displayed in store windows and hand-delivered by young boys.

Economic success for both building owner and the traveling company depended on the general economy of the community and the organizational skills and internal management of both the traveling troupe and performance hall owners.[30] These economic issues would be important factors in the distribution and exhibition of motion pictures in Iowa well into the 1960s.

Cost was a major factor in the initial location of the general hall theater, the grand opera house, or the Opera Hall Theater building in the commercial blocks of Iowa's towns and cities. The narrow profit margin in exhibition of traveling shows may account for the incorporation of performance halls or theater spaces within a larger commercial building.[31] This practice resulted in imitation, adaptation, and longevity of these facilities in the future as movie theaters due to the continuation of ancillary supporting commercial spaces for movie exhibition which also had a narrow profit margin.

Influence of Fraternal Organizations and Ethnic Groups on Public Entertainment Venues

Another factor revealed in the various cultural resource surveys of commercial buildings and movie theaters in Iowa relating to the incorporation of theaters as part of a shared commercial venture, is the fact that throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fraternal organizations erected numerous halls and opera houses to house commercial entertainment, community events, and lodge activities. Some were built to be used by all fraternal groups in the town and/or to house all community events in town. Of architectural note is the tradition of fraternal groups who constructed buildings with the opera house on the ground floor and the lodge rooms above in secondary spaces. These buildings also had a hierarchy of dedicated commercial spaces for retail sales, businesses, and for offices of professionals that, with the theater income, generated revenue for the fraternal organization to maintain their private meeting rooms and philanthropic activities.[32] Iowa cultural resource surveys indicate that, in addition to other fraternal organizational events, these theater spaces also served as venues for the exhibition of movies along with live stage events, or as venues for movie exhibition only.

[30] Ibid., E-9.
[31] Ibid., E-9 and E-10.
[32] Ibid., E-15. An associated pattern common in Iowa was the conversion of privately owned opera houses to lodge halls for fraternal groups throughout the twentieth century.

Some of the fraternal orders that erected community halls equipped with stages and scenery were ethnically-based. The long theatrical tradition in Iowa beginning in the 1870s included Czech and German theater.[33] Cultural resource surveys conducted in Iowa indicate many immigrant groups, including Iowa's large Slovakian immigrant community, built one-story frame community halls; others, particularly those of German heritage, erected two-story buildings with a second floor opera hall, first floor gymnasium, and a basement bowling alley.[34] Often, these various community hall spaces later served as venues for the commercial exhibition of movies to the public.

UTILITY THEATER HALLS AND OPERA HOUSE FARE

Despite their name, opera houses in Iowa rarely showed true operatic productions; comic opera or operettas were the most common forms of the genre. Moreover, traveling productions and repertory companies stopped in Iowa communities only a few times a year. During the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, managers of general hall theaters, grand opera houses and Opera Hall Theaters booked a variety of performers to fill their schedules including variety acts (vaudeville), minstrels, hypnotists and magicians, lectures, slide shows, and individuals demonstrating new inventions like the phonograph and early motion picture machines.[35] During this period, the popularity of vaudeville companies gained momentum and live theatrical company productions decreased; by the end of World War I, vaudeville and/or movie pictures became the staple of many small town theater buildings and opera houses.

JACKRABBIT TRAVELING MOTION PICTURE SHOW

One of the earliest movie exhibition phenomena in Iowa and other Midwestern states was the motion picture "Jackrabbit Tour." Entrepreneurs acquired rights to exhibit a movie in a specific territory moving from town to town to show the movie. The operation of the Jackrabbit Tour was very similar to the earlier activities associated with doing business on a live theater traveling circuit. The business owner initially established a relationship and contract with the local exhibition venue which would be rented; each party either split the gross receipts for each performance or the exhibitor rented the community hall or opera house for a given number of performances.[36] In addition to hiring existing halls, the movie men on the jackrabbit tour erected tents or just projected images on the exterior wall of a building. At this time,

[33] Ibid., E-16.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., E-17.
[36] Ibid., E-9.

many small towns lacked electric power and the traveling exhibiters arrived with both projector and generator. Because of the rural character of Iowa in the first half of the twentieth century, jackrabbit tours continued for several decades.[37] For example, Iowa movie theater owner Robert Fridley recalled his first exposure to the movies in 1920 in the farming community of 255 people in Westgate, Iowa. The film exhibitor provided a projector and film, in cooperation with town merchants who erected a large sign board painted white on one side of Main Street. On the opposite side they built a projection booth out of sheet metal mounted between two telephone poles about ten feet above grade. For seating the local lumberyard loaned twelve-inch wide planks which rested on hollow tile on each end.[38]

The Airdome[39]

Another unique innovation in public entertainment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the airdome, an open-air theater consisting of four walls without a roof and seats directly on the ground or combined with raised bleachers. Most of the airdome theaters that featured more permanent construction than canvas tenting and operated in the summers over a period of years were commercial ventures owned and operated by entrepreneurs who controlled the local theater venue. In the 1890s, a circuit designed expressly for theatrical productions in airdome theaters traveled in the Midwest.[40] Within a few years, a wide variety of live performances were offered. The airdome theater flourished from the beginning of the twentieth century until World War I with its greatest expansion around 1910,[41] a period when entertainment offerings began to include moving pictures. Initially the moving pictures featured illustrated songs. The presentations evolved into a combination of vaudeville, motion pictures, and local talent as well as exclusive reliance on moving pictures as early as 1913.[42] Although they declined, particularly with the advent of air conditioning, airdomes, such as the theater operating in Davenport, Iowa in 1932, continued to operate during the Great Depression and with less frequency during World War II.[43]

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[37] Robert Fridley "Robert Fridley Biography." TD [photocopy], Vertical File. State Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society of Iowa. n.d.
[38] Ibid.
[39] According to movie historian, Landis K. Magnuson, the early practice of using two words (air dome) or even a hyphenated plural (air-domes) changed over time to the standard use of airdome and airdomes.
[40] Will H. Locke, "Gay '90s Airdomes Ace Summer Spots For Repsters," *Billboard*, 6 November 1948, 53.
[41] Landis K. Magnuson, "'The Roof Except the Sky' The Rise and Fall of Airdomes in American Popular Entertainment," in *Theatre Symposium. A Publication of the Southeastern Theater Conference. Outdoor Performance Volume 17*, ed. Jay Malarcher (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 30.
[42] Ibid., 32.
[43] Ibid., 50.

Those erected as semi-permanent structures to operate during the summer months (as opposed to tent companies that toured on circuit with their own stage and equipment and canvas walls) ranged from an empty lot with folding chairs to permanent venues with formal entrances and decorated sidewalls. Typically they had an articulated front façade with a box office; a rear stage, proscenium, and a covered off-stage area with dressing rooms; open air seating (chairs and/or benches); and a board, canvas, or metal fence isolating the view from the surrounding streetscape. Many sold concessions to provide the necessary revenue to support the theater.[44]

Various research sources indicate airdome theaters showing movies in Bettendorf, Dubuque, and Algona.[45] One of the earliest such theaters in Iowa was W. F. Brinton's airdome in Washington, that opened in the early summer of 1908.[46] The *New York Democratic Mirro*r lists the Iowa-Illinois airdome circuit in 1909.[47] Movie historian Richard Poole documented the comprehensive history of airdome theaters in Iowa in "Spectacular Novelty, the Airdomes of Iowa, 1905-1915."[48]

RISE OF THE MOTION PICTURE: 1900 – 1930

Thomas Edison invented the moving picture machine in 1892, and demonstrated the concept in a vertical feed Kinetoscope[49] machine designed to be shown to individual customers. Edison opened the first Kinetoscope parlor on April 14, 1894, in New York City. During the next two years, Edison also exhibited the Vitascope projection system, which utilized a direct projection method via film and light on a wall or screen surface. In 1895, the Lumiere brothers of Paris developed a theater model for exhibiting moving pictures that placed the audience in a hall and projected motion pictures onto a special surface. The Lumieres brought their *Cinematographe* device[50] to the United States and held a premiere show in Washington, DC on January 1, 1897. In May of 1897, an Edison Kintetoscope film was shown at the Graham Opera House in Washington, Iowa.[51]

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[44] Melnick and Fuchs, 16-17.
[45] *Cinematour*, "Cinema History Around the World," http//www.cinematour.com/theaters/us/IA/1.html (accessed 31 May 2010).
[46] Magnuson, 30.
[47] Ibid., 52.
[48] Ibid. Poole presented his paper at the Theatre History Seminar at the Museum of Repertoire Americana, in Mount Pleasant Iowa, in 1991. The museum houses a photographic and research collection on airdome theaters in Iowa and the Midwest.
[49] A single-user device for viewing through a magnifying lens a sequence of pictures on an endless band of film that moved continuously through a light source and a rapidly rotating shutter that created an illusion of motion.
[50] A cinematograph is a film camera, which also serves as a film projector and developer.
[51] "Grand Theater," [advertisement] *Washington Press*, 12 May 1897, 2.

Movies were first shown as a technological novelty — "moving" pictures. The earliest commercial exhibition was by Kinetoscope, a machine through which one person at a time could view the film. By the end of 1895, Kinetoscope machines appeared in most major cities and even small towns in the Midwest in a variety of venues - department stores, hotel lobbies, bars, drugstores, penny arcades, and dime museums.

Thereafter, the commercial exhibition of moving pictures quickly joined traditional American entertainment venues.[52] Importantly, the ease of transition from the Kinetoscope machine to the projection of moving pictures in theater settings is due to the exhibition of motion pictures as part of live theatrical and vaudeville circuits, and quickly established the moving picture as part of mass entertainment.

CHANGES IN IOWA'S POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT PATTERNS: AN OVERVIEW

Initially the smaller communities of Iowa and the nation became acquainted with moving pictures in community hall theaters and "opera houses" as part of touring lecture series that added short, silent movies to their usual offerings of photographic slides or magic lantern shows.[53] Soon, the exhibition of motion pictures occurred almost simultaneously in penny arcades and amusement parks. Early examples of the exhibition of movies in Iowa's opera houses and theater halls can be found in numerous newspapers of the time. For example, in its August 9, 1905 edition, the Adams County *Union Republic* noted that the Clarinda Iowa Chautauqua circuit would feature movie picture shows and a concert at the Corning Opera House in the upcoming week. On January 6, 1906, the *Union Republic* announced a benefit for the Corning community fire department would be presented by D.W. Roberts "Famous Moving Picture Company" of New York. A moving picture based on a French fable would be presented at the town's opera house.

Setting up and operating a movie theater in 1906 was relatively inexpensive. A projector cost around $65, a storefront room rented for $5 a month, a painted wall or a white sheet served for a screen, and benches

[52] Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures, A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 5-8.
[53] Putnam, 6.

provided cost-efficient seating. A 1000-foot reel necessary to wind the film during the projection of images could be ordered through the Sears and Roebuck catalog for a cost of one dollar.[54]

In the larger cities of Iowa, movie theaters appeared as early as 1905. City directories for Des Moines from 1905 and 1906 list a number of movie houses. Similarly, a 1907 article in the *Des Moines Register and Leader* claims the city is crowded with "movie picture shows." These early film venues first exhibited what became known as actuality films - motion pictures taken of everyday life and events such as scenes of vaudeville performers, comic skits, trick effects, notable persons, railway trains, scenic and foreign places, fire and police workers, military exercises, parades, naval scenes, expositions, and sporting events.

By 1914, every American town with a population of over 5,000 had at least one movie theater. Supporting weekly attendance at the movies was a shorter workweek and rising wages in comparison to the low cost of movie admission.[55] By the end of World War I, motion pictures increasingly squeezed out the "legitimate stage" or "live theater" in large community theater halls and opera houses throughout the United States. However, vaudeville offerings continued to be closely linked with motion picture exhibition.

In Iowa, the number of movie theaters rapidly expanded from their early inception in the first decade of the twentieth century through the post-World War I period. The period between 1911 and 1913 has been characterized as "Movie Madness" in Iowa, and particularly in Des Moines. The popularity of motion pictures in the state's capital was due, in large part, to the synergy created by national studios such as Universal, Mutual, and Warner Brothers that owned theaters and/or maintained film exchanges in the city and the efforts of early local motion picture entrepreneurs who took a leadership role in the industry in the state. These Iowa movie pioneers included: A. H. Blank, Isaac Ruben, Julius Singer, Charles Nabur, Jack Getchell, and Jacob Milowslowsky. Utilizing extensive advertising and a mix of variety and exclusive feature movies, these men initiated local movie exhibition practices to appeal to and meet the demand of an increasingly broad audience. From their trade associations, market strategies emerged promoting the

[54]Hans Madsen, "Going to the talkies, Natte recounts local movie theater history," *Fort Dodge Messenger*, 24 October 2010. http://www.messengernews.net/page/content.detail/id/533780.html (accessed October 30, 2010).

[55] Steven J. Ross, *Movies and American Society* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1983), 14.

state's movie industry and trade press. All of this began during a sustained boom in movie theater construction beginning in 1911, and continuing to the onset of World War I.[56]

This period was not without its problems. Although major studios negotiated contracts with legitimate opera houses and theater halls for week-long screening of major films, the market remained uncertain. Delays in release dates of feature two-reel films (sometimes up to a year) and problems with the arrival of daily features that ran for three to four days were common. Still, the growing number of movie houses, including the majority of Des Moines downtown, as a rule, showed on daily basis only short films supplemented by newsreels, bi-weekly serials, and series.[57]

It was during the pre-World War I period that increased newspaper advertising by movie studios and studio-authored newspaper articles initially set the stage of the future marketing of moving pictures. Of local note was the placement, by 1913, of regular advertising by national studios, such as Universal, Mutual, and Reliance, in the *Des Moines Register* and the *Des Moines Leader* (and other newspapers in the state).[58] Local newspaper ads ran daily. Articles about movies became regular features in local newspapers and included topics such as: "Moving Picture Folk;" plot synopses for coming attractions; stories about local movie business-men in Iowa's cities; and articles about the local, state, and regional movie industry and related businesses.[59] Most were the work of publicists hired by the major studios.

The growth of movie theaters was significant. Des Moines' city directories show motion picture theaters in numerous downtown shopping districts and at streetcar hubs. It was not limited to cities and large towns, but spread throughout the state. The chart in this section reflects the 1920 United States Census population data and demonstrates the relationship between population and number of movie theaters in Iowa. The table comprises data collected by Mary Bennett that is now on file at the State Historical Society of Iowa. Based primarily on city directories of the municipalities of Iowa, Bennett compiled lists of operating venues for exhibition of movies roughly from 1917 through 1923.

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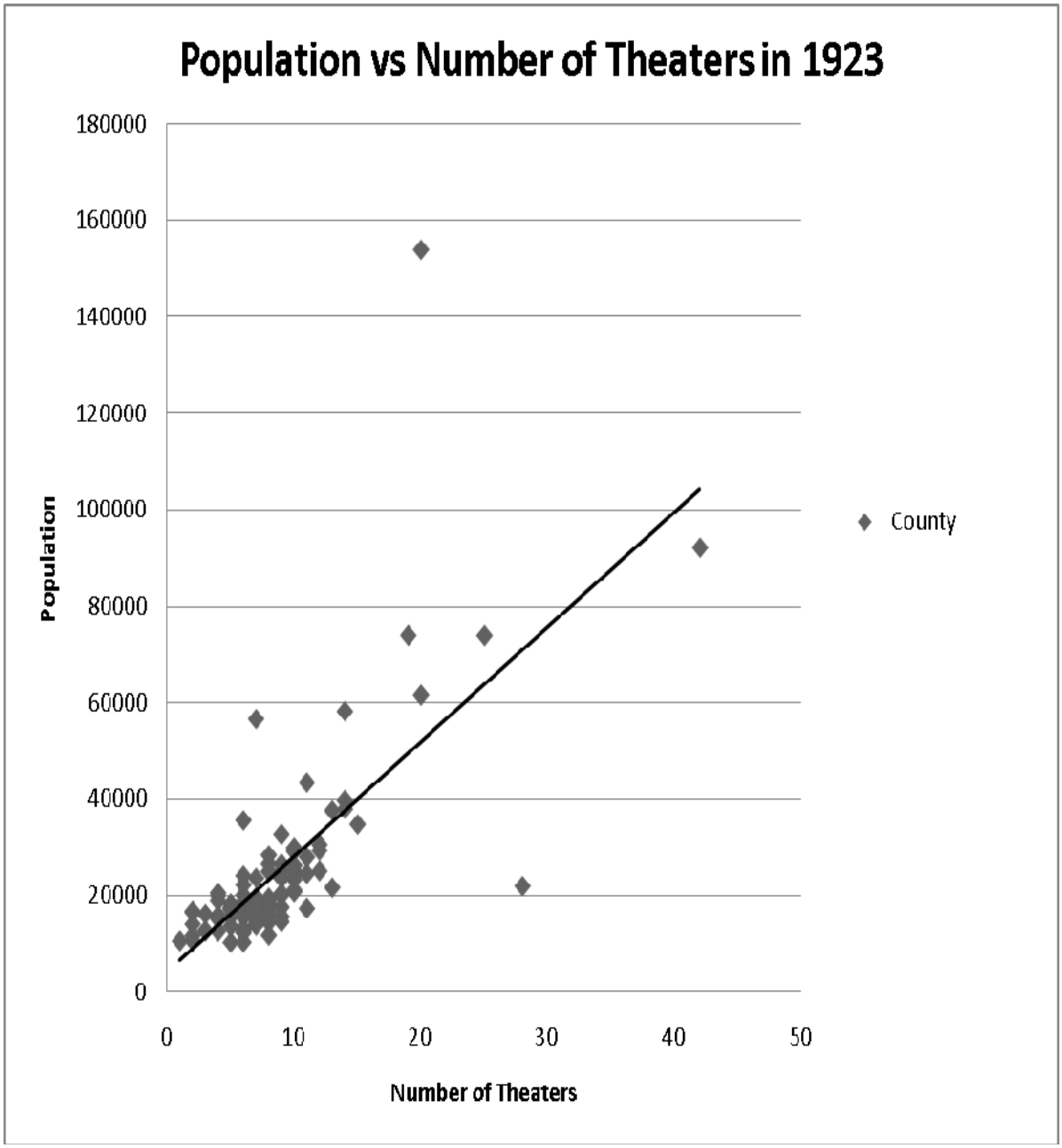
[56] Richard Abel, "The Movies in a 'Not So Visible Place:' Des Moines, Iowa, 1911-1914," *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historic Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, edited by Katherine Fuller-Seeley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 107, 120.
[57] Ibid., 114.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 115.


Population vs Number of Theaters in 1923
180000
160000
140000
120000
100000
80000
60000
40000
20000
0
Population
0
10
20
30
40
50
Number of Theaters
County

MOVIE THEATERS AND POPULATION BY COUNTY, 1917-1925

County	Population	Theaters by 1923
Adair	14259	8
Adams	10521	2
Allamakee	17283	5
Appanoose	30535	12
Audubon	12528	4
Benton	24080	6
Black Hawk	56570	7
Boone	29892	10
Bremer	16728	2
Buchanan	19890	4
Buena Vista	18556	8
Butler	17843	8
Calhoun	17783	8
Carroll	21549	13
Cass	19421	8
Cedar	17560	9
Cerro Gordo	34675	15
Cherokee	17706	7
Chickasaw	15431	6
Clarke	10506	1
Clay	15660	8
Clayton	25032	12
Clinton	43371	11
Crawford	20614	10
Dallas	25120	10
Davis	12574	3
Decatur	16566	8
Delaware	18183	5
Des Moines	35520	6
Dickenson	10241	6
Emmet	12627	6

County	Population	Theaters by 1923
Fayette	29251	12
Floyd	18860	4
Franklin	15807	4
Fremont	15449	4
Greene	16467	6
Grundy	14420	9
Guthrie	17506	5
Hamilton	19531	7
Hancock	14723	7
Hardin	23337	10
Harrison	24488	11
Henry	18298	7
Howard	13705	7
Humboldt	12951	6
Ida	11689	8
Iowa	18600	6
Jackson	19931	6
Jasper	27855	11
Jefferson	16440	2
Johnson	26482	8
Jones	18607	6
Keokuk	20983	10
Kossuth	25082	9
Lee	39676	14
Linn	74004	19
Louisa	12179	6
Lucas	15686	4
Lyon	15431	5
Madison	15020	4
Mahaska	28270	8
Marion	24957	8

County	Population	Theaters by 1923
Marshall	32630	9
Mills	15422	7
Mitchell	13921	2
Monoma	17125	7
Monroe	23467	9
Montgomery	17048	5
Muscatine	29042	10
O'Brien	19051	8
Osceola	10223	5
Page	24137	10
Palo Alto	15486	9
Plymouth	23584	7
Pocahontas	15602	7
Polk	154029	20
Pottawattamie	61550	20
Poweshiek	19910	9
Ringgold	12919	6
Sac	17500	7

County	Population	Theaters by 1923
Scott	73952	25
Shelby	16065	3
Sioux	26458	9
Story	26185	10
Tama	21861	28
Taylor	15514	9
Union	17268	11
Van Buren	14060	7
Wapello	37937	14
Warren	18047	7
Washington	20421	4
Wayne	15378	4
Webster	37611	13
Winnebago	13489	5
Winneshiek	22091	6
Woodbury	92171	42
Worth	11630	2
Wright	20348	9

ERA OF THE NICKELODEON THEATER IN IOWA: 1905 – 1915[60]

The rise in the number of movie theaters in the nation that began in the years before World War I was primarily due to the advent of the nickelodeon[61] movie theater - storefront theaters that quickly became a wildly successful innovation.

Following the tradition of vaudeville, nickelodeon theaters provided a continuous program of movies from morning through the evening hours; the frequent showings allowed patrons to stop in almost anytime, unlike variety theaters. However, in contrast to the vaudeville theaters which showed primarily actuality films, the nickelodeons featured more fictional films. By 1904, fiction films (also called acted

[60] Allen, *The Big Change: America Transforms Itself, 1900 -1950*, 106. Sources vary on the date of 1903 or 1905 when Harry Davis, a vaudeville magnate, built the first nickelodeon in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

[61] Also known as the *Nickel Theater*, the nickelodeon was named for its five-cent admission price combined with the Greek root word for theater.

films) emerged in film production. Comedies were the favorite of the audiences; also popular were fictional films that focused on contemporary social issues that reflected the Progressive Era. Typically the films ran for twenty minutes and changed daily.

By 1910, nickelodeons served as the primary outlet for motion pictures in the nation. These theaters attracted a wide clientele, —immigrants, working class and middle-class audiences, and women and children.[62] At the same time, venues for vaudeville performances, traveling exhibitors, and amusement parks continued to show movies as part of their regular entertainment.

The nickelodeon came to Iowa very early in the development of this movie theater genre. Some accounts credit Kip Elbert and Jack Getchell as opening a nickelodeon theater called the *Unique* around 1905. Another of the earliest nickelodeons in Iowa was the 1907 Delphi Theater in Cedar Rapids, a "movies only" purpose-built movie theater.[63] Abraham H. Blank of Des Moines was a pioneer in the nickelodeon business in Iowa, establishing one of the earliest such theaters in Des Moines in 1908.[64] According to the obituary of his son, A. H. Blank came to Des Moines as a young man, bought a movie projector and a screen for a few hundred dollars, rented space in a small downtown store seating twenty-five people, and showed 10-minute films for a nickel to commuters as they waited for trolley cars.[65]

The rapid evolution of the nickelodeon mirrored that of the moving pictures they exhibited. Just as films began to stand on their own and not as part of the larger vaudeville or live theater circuit, so too did the venues erected to show them. Middle-class audiences at this time not only patronized the nickelodeon theater (devoted primarily to moving pictures) usually in the afternoons, they also attended the better movie houses and vaudeville and movie theaters in amusement parks. By 1910, nearly all American

[62] Richard Butsch, "The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990," *Movies and American Society*, ed. Steven J. Ross (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 218.

[63] Cinematreasures.org, "Iowa," http://cinematreasures.org/location/country=181&state=16/ (accessed May 31, 2010). Name changes include the Crystal (1912), the Rialto (1920s), and the Towne Theater (1948); the building was demolished.

[64] Fridley.

[65] Frank Santiago, "Myron 'Mike' Blank donor to D.M. is dead at 93," *Des Moines Register*, 27 February, 2005. http://slick.org/deathwatch/mailarchive/msg01678.html (accessed October 10, 2010). Abraham Harry Blank, born in Galatz, Romania in 1879, came with his family to Council Bluffs as an 8-year-old. Abraham Blank went on to build theaters in Cedar Rapids, Newton, Waterloo, and Davenport in Iowa, and in Omaha, Nebraska. His movie houses were among the first to provide organ music for silent films. By the mid-1920s, his Central States Theater Corporation headquartered in Des Moines, made him one of the largest private owners of movie theaters in the nation.

communities of any size had a permanent schedule of movie shows. At that time *Variety* estimated there were almost ten thousand nickelodeons in cities from New York to San Francisco.[66]

Initially, the typical nickelodeon theater building was small and not particularly comfortable, comprised of a long, narrow, and darkly lit screening room in ". . .a converted cigar store, pawnshop, restaurant, or skating rink renovated to look like a vaudeville theatre."[67] In an effort to imitate the appearance of legitimate theaters, but with a minimum of expense, the façade of the nickelodeon theater usually displayed a prominent name, electric lights, and colorful advertising posters. Often, a small window above the box office accessed the projection booth, through which the projectionist might escape in the event of a fire; fires were a very real danger due to the highly flammable properties of nitrate film.[68] The interior was sometimes more modest than a vaudeville theater building. The most modest of these movie theaters used wooden benches or wooden chairs that faced a simple elevated platform with a nine-by-twelve foot screen painted or attached directly to the platform's back wall. The projection booth elevated above pedestrian height housing the hand-cranked projector was at the wall opposite from the stage. A piano player provided live accompaniment to the movies.[69]

Nickelodeons in Iowa as well as in other states showed films of fifteen to twenty minutes in length. This allowed a variety of types and subjects to be shown continuously, — filmed song and dance acts, sports events, "scenics" that featured views from all over the world taken from moving trains, "actualities" (the precursors of documentaries), comedies and melodramas, and other presentations.[70] Although touted as a movies-only venue, some nickelodeons offered live entertainment, such as a comedian, animal act, or illustrated lecture, before or immediately following the movie.[71]

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[66] Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk, an Architectural History of the Movie Theater* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 22-23.

[67] Gomery, 18. Quotation also appears in "Nickelodeon," *Dead Media Archive*. New York University Department of Media, Culture and Communication, citing: Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies.* London: Routledge, 2004, http://cultureandcommunication.org/deadmedia/index.php/Nickelodeon (accessed February 23, 2011).

[68] "Nickelodeon,"

[69] Gomery, 18-19.

[70] *Wikipedia*, "Nickelodeon (movie theater)," http://en.wikipedia.org/nickelodeon_(movie theater) (accessed June 5, 2010).

[71] Ibid.

The economics of the nickelodeon were different than previous live theater management: the exhibitor rented building space and bought his film by the foot. If he bought one reel of film, which had a length up to a thousand feet, he paid per foot. By 1910, approximately 26 million Americans attended nickelodeon theaters each week. This growth marked a "pivotal transition in the film industry and revolutionized American mass entertainment. For the first time, films had permanent homes and were able to be distributed nation-wide."[72] This stability stimulated investment in theater ownership/management and film distribution, bringing together various enterprises associated with distribution and exhibition of movies.

As the nickelodeon theater evolved, three major changes in movie exhibition and attendance patterns occurred. Exterior and interior design and decorative treatments became more grandiose, while these theaters still retained the basic arrangement of the traditional theater floor plan and features. The more opulent of the nickelodeon theaters featured permanent seating arranged on either side of the center aisle. The floor of the theater slanted and, at the front, a small area housed an organ or piano. The entrance to the nickelodeon theater often was an arch, with a ticket booth at the front. Nickelodeons also initiated the showing of longer story films along with the showing of popular short films. As a result, longer films, which heightened the emotional engagement of the theatergoer, became increasingly popular. Although originally associated with working-class audiences, the appeal of nickelodeons by the onset of World War I extended into the movie industry larger, better-appointed movie theaters began to appear.[73]

CONVERTED OPERA HOUSES IN IOWA: 1910 – 1930

During the first decades of the twentieth century, various cultural resource surveys indicate that the owners of many Iowa opera houses, especially those with ground-floor auditoria, attempted to protect their investment by converting their live performance halls to movie houses. It was an effort to capture revenues from both motion pictures and live performances. Theater owners outfitted their existing auditorium spaces with screens at the back of the stage and installed a projection booth in the balcony. By the beginning of World War I, moving pictures in the Midwest were the major attraction at most small-town opera houses.[74]

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[72] "Nickelodeon," citing Bosley Crowther, "When Movies Were Young," *New York Times*, 1955.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Patricia Ann Mather, "The Theatrical History of Wichita," (Master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1950), 192.

Typical of converted opera houses was the Strand Theatre in Cedar Rapids that opened as a legitimate theater with its own stock acting troupe in 1915. It had a seating capacity of 1,500 people and was the first theater in Cedar Rapids with a cantilevered single balcony. (Previously, theaters had multiple shallow balconies supported by posts which blocked views from certain vantage points.) The ornate theater featured a color scheme of ivory and old rose, an ornate mural over the proscenium sounding board, and twelve loge boxes. A year after opening, the management converted the theater to a combination vaudeville and movie theater. Typical of the evolution of movie theater houses, two subsequent renovations due to technological changes occurred. In 1930, just after the arrival of movies with sound, the owners renovated the theater to exhibit "talkies."[75] In 1958, the owner modernized the building, adding a wide screen for Cinemascope, renamed it the *World*, and reopened with *Ben Hur*.[76]

As early as the 1920s, a second wave of conversion of opera houses to movie theaters, or remodeling of existing movie equipment in opera houses occurred with the arrival of sound in the late 1920s. The 1890 Grand Opera House in Dubuque converted from live theater, special events, and stage shows to movie exhibition in 1930. The removal of the theater's second balcony to allow installation of a projection booth and new equipment reduced the seating capacity from 1,100 to 644. The renovation included the covering of the orchestra pit, flattening the front of the semi-circular stage and shutting off the theater's "fly space" used for storage of sets above the stage. A massive new air ventilation system filled the rehearsal rooms below the stage. Two large fireproof projection rooms replaced the second floor dressing rooms and the hall area that previously served the upper balcony. The owner installed a new screen and sound equipment. After these improvements, the theater became known as The Grand Theater and exhibition of movies continued for another fifty-eight years.[77]

[75] It closed in 1981.
[76] Cinematreasures.org.
[77] Ibid. During the "movie era" ownership of the Grand the ownership group also acquired The Strand at 12th and Main, The State at 10th and Main, the Avon near 9th and Main and The RKO Orpheum at 4th and Main (now Five Flags Theater). The Grand and Orpheum were usually home to first run "A" films, while the other screens showed more B feature double bills. The State and Strand both burned to the ground. The Avon closed when J.C. Penney purchased the property. By the early 1970s only The Grand and Orpheum remained. Civic leaders saved the Orpheum and the renovated facility reopened as "Five Flags Theater." In 1976, the Dubinsky Brothers chain purchased the theater and the Grand continued to show movies for several more years.

PURPOSE-BUILT MOVIE THEATERS IN IOWA: 1900 – 1930

Vaudeville Theaters and Small Movie Houses in Iowa: 1905 – 1930

Smaller than the grand opera house and larger than the average nickelodeon theater, combination vaudeville, as well as small, purpose-built silent movie theaters, incorporated basic features related to variety theater and motion picture exhibition. By 1921, of 17,824 theaters in the United States, ninety percent seated less than 1,000. The largest percentage (thirty-seven percent) seated between 251 to 400 movie goers. In 1922, two-and-a-half percent of movie theater venues presented performances before the main feature movie, six percent still had vaudeville programs, forty-six percent used theater organs, and thirty percent used small orchestras of under ten musicians. By 1925, weekly attendance of movies in the country reached fifty million.[78]

The vaudeville theater, as part of Iowa's entertainment venues was a descendant of Variety Theater popular from the 1860s through the 1870s, and evolved from the concert saloon and variety hall to the early twentieth century vaudeville theater. By the turn-of-the-century, what became known as "polite vaudeville" shows occurred in a more refined, alcohol-free setting with a mixed-gender, middle-class audience. At this time, vaudeville had matured and featured large circuits which booked into both large and small theater venues in almost every sizable community in the country. Small-time vaudeville included countless locally owned and managed houses. Converted saloons, aging opera halls, multi-purpose halls, and purpose-built theater buildings all catered to a wide range of clientele.[79] As early as 1902, the large Pantages' vaudeville circuit incorporated moving pictures into its variety shows. Its largest counterpart, the Orpheum Circuit, later followed suit. Both circuits operated in Iowa.

At its height during the early twentieth century, vaudeville circuits played to all economic classes and in auditorium sizes including: "small time" venues for lower-paying contracts requiring more frequent performances in rougher, often-converted theaters; "medium time" in purpose-built theaters for moderate wages requiring two performances each day; and the "big time" contracts paying several thousand dollars per week in large, urban theaters largely patronized by the middle and upper-middle classes.

A modest example of the vaudeville/silent movie theater venues in Iowa included the Story Theater, erected in 1913, in Story City for vaudeville performances and exhibition of silent movies. The theater

[78] Melnick and Fuchs, 56.
[79] Ibid.

was part of a two-part commercial block building. Renovated in 1930, after the advent of "talkies," today, it retains many of its historic features including its original balcony and seats, as well as dressing rooms behind and under the stages.

A more refined version of the "medium time" vaudeville theater constructed specifically for both live performances and movies was the three-story, two-part commercial block Cresco Theater in Cresco, Iowa. Opened in 1915, the first movie exhibited was a five-reeler accompanied by an eight-member orchestra seated in a pit in front of and below the stage.[80]

An example of the large, urban theater on the vaudeville circuit that utilized "big time" contracts was the Capitol Theater in Davenport. Erected in 1920 and designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Rapp and Rapp for the Dubinsky Brothers, the theater initially showed a mixed bill of vaudeville acts and movies; later, it switched to motion picture exhibition only. On each side of the main floor auditorium, which originally seated 2,500, it featured alcoves containing a grand piano on one side and a harp on the other. It also had a working Wicks pipe organ. The walls of the lobby, foyer, and upstairs spaces featured artistic paintings.

Another typical example of the high-style, large vaudeville house in Iowa, which also showed silent movies, was the Majestic Theater (a.k.a. President Theater*)* in Des Moines that opened on November 17, 1907.[81] Also designed by the Chicago firm of Rapp and Rapp as a vaudeville house, it cost $125,000. The auditorium held seating on the main floor, a first and second balcony (gallery) and six proscenium boxes on each side of the stage.[82] The Majestic ran live acts and film features continuously from one to eleven p.m. (15 cents for a matinee, 25 cents for an evening show). The theater was one of Kip Elbert and Jack Getchell's original three movie theater venues (the other two were the "Unique" and the "Princess"); it later became part of the Orpheum Circuit.[83]

By the time of the introduction of talking pictures in 1926, almost no vaudeville bill failed to include a healthy selection of cinema. As a result, vaudeville priced itself out of the market by the marriage of its

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[80] Mike and Vicki Walker, *Cinemental Journeys; An Uncommon Guide to Classic Movie Theaters: Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa* (Kansas City, MO: How High the Moon Publishing LLC, 2007), 20-21. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

[81] It started showing movies in 1909.

[82] Cinematreasures.org. The building was demolished in 1938.

[83] "Lost Cinemas of Greater Des Moines," http://lostcines.blogspot.com/2006_02_01archive.html (accessed October 14, 2010).

live performances with moving pictures. When the "talkies" arrived, even small-time[84] theaters began to offer "big time" performers on screen at a nickel a seat. This economic reality, the standardization of film distribution, and talking pictures of the 1930s, preordained the end of vaudeville. One stellar example was the demise of the Orpheum vaudeville circuit within four years after its takeover by RKO movie studios.[85]

Commercial Block Main Street and Neighborhood Movie Houses

The popularity of the movies with the working and middle classes created a significant demand for movie theaters along every rural market center Main Street and in neighborhoods of expanding cities. These movie houses ultimately constituted the largest number of movie theater types in the country and in Iowa. By 1914, the practice of erecting movie houses inside old storefronts, aging opera houses or new, cheaply constructed theaters became obsolete in large cities. This was due to the dramatic change in motion picture ideology; in less than two years the movie itself became the integral part of the show. By 1920, movie theaters were as ornately decorated as theaters previously built to house live theater or high-class vaudeville.[86]

The architect, Arthur Meloy, noted in *Theaters and Picture Houses*, published in 1916, "The greatest demand at present is for the motion picture theater." Meloy estimated that there were about twenty-five thousand moving picture houses in the United States. He observed the "phenomenal and unprecedented" growth of movie theaters, noting the conversion of larger legitimate theaters in many of the nation's large cities. At that time, the average capacity for large movie houses ranged from 1,200 to 1,800 seats; for small houses it ranged from 400 to 1,000. During this period, increasingly "beautiful" theaters showed movies in "nicer parts of town" and successfully competed with nickelodeons, even though movies shown in more spacious and handsome theaters often charged a higher admission of ten cents or more.[87]

Part of the demand for new movie theaters of modest size occurred in response to the expanding system of electric streetcar lines in towns and communities as well as the growing use of the automobile and paved city streets. By the 1920s, new movie houses located in "suburban" neighborhoods away from

[84] As noted previously, "small time" venues required more frequent performances in rougher, often converted theaters.
[85] "Lost Cinemas of Greater Des Moines."
[86] Melnick and Fuchs, 28.
[87] Gomery, 20-23, 30-32.

urban centers, especially in larger cities.[88] By 1932, the downtown movie palace boom was over and new smaller neighborhood theaters constructed in outlying urban neighborhoods, newly developing suburban communities, and in the commercial districts of small towns competed with the downtown movie palaces and older opera house and vaudeville theater movie venues.

Among the variety of downtown movie theaters of this era in Iowa were the small, 1920s Gem Theater in rural Moville, which seated around two hundred, and the Dodge Theater in Keokuk, located in the Dodge Hotel,[89] which continued the tradition of the opera house as part of a larger commercial block.

The Gem Theater in Moville was a typical, small-town theater that served a rural, Iowa community for many years. Opened in the 1920s with a seating capacity for 200, the theater finally closed around 1963. Unique for a theater of its size, it had a balcony and featured a neon sign over the two entrance doors. Between the doors were two large glass cases containing movie posters instead of a marquee. Serving generations of patrons, it was open both weekdays and weekends for many years, showing two different features each week.[90]

Much of this growth in the purpose-built smaller movie house was part of the continuation of the motion picture boom that began in the mid-1920s. Between 1928 and 1930, fifteen million more patrons than the previous year attended movies. The rise of the Main Street and suburban neighborhood movie house in the 1920s was impressive. In 1919, 1,500 vaudeville theaters and opera houses hosted variety acts and legitimate theater attractions; by 1926, fewer than 400 of these theaters existed, while the number of motion picture houses reached 20,000. In 1927, movie theaters grossed sixty times the amount of legitimate live theaters.[91]

Rise of the Movie Palace: 1912 -1930

In 1908, Sig Lubin, a motion picture producer/distributor from Philadelphia, developed one of the first and most ambitious plans for building a large capacity theater for vaudeville and motion pictures. He erected the Palace, an 800-seat theater for vaudeville and film in his hometown. The theater presented four shows a day, incorporating six vaudeville acts and one-reel films. Lubin expanded his theater

[88] Valentine, 88, 92.
[89] Cinematreasures.org.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Valentine, 65.

operation throughout the country and, by 1909, controlled fifteen theaters.[92] The Palace was a precursor of both the movie palace and of the centralized movie theater chain.

By 1910, this new type of movie house dedicated to exhibiting motion pictures appeared in the nation's larger cities.[93] It appealed to the upper-middle class by providing opulent, high style theater design and a higher class of musical programming as a prelude to the first-run of a feature film. Unlike the nickelodeon theater which was generated largely from within or near the Midwest for the working and middle classes, the movie palace evolved largely in New York, then Chicago, and then Los Angeles.[94]

These theaters were a dramatic departure from the nickelodeon theaters established in converted commercial spaces. However, in many cities, particularly the Midwest, they did not stray far from the smaller gilded opera house and high-style vaudeville theater building. Even in movie palaces where vaudeville programs were not presented, the format of prelude, newsreel, shorts, and coming attractions prior to the screening of the feature film was a derivation of the organizing principle of vaudeville - a series of autonomous, disconnected acts.[95] However, it was the use of the longer feature films that provided the stronger entertainment option, a successful combination of short and varied entertainment offerings with the pleasure of the main attraction — the narrative.

Architects such as Thomas W. Lamb[96] in New York or the Chicago firm of Rapp and Rapp[97] specialized in movie palace design, creating buildings with larger seating capacity, the latest projection equipment,

[92] Robert C. Allen, *Vaudeville and Film 1895-1915: A Study of Media Interaction* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 232.
[93] Ibid. While eschewing vaudeville, they did have accommodations for selected live performances.
[94] Ibid., 2.
[95] Ibid., 320-321.
[96] Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes / Thomas W. Lamb's Theaters: An Architect for Stage and Screen," *New York Times*, 10 October 2008. Thomas W. Lamb achieved recognition as one of the leading architects of the movie theater construction boom prior to and after World War I. Particularly associated with the Fox theaters, Loew's theaters and Keith-Albee chains of vaudeville and film theaters, Lamb was instrumental in establishing and developing the design and construction of the large, lavishly decorated theaters, known as "Movie Palaces," as showcases for the films of the emerging Hollywood studios. His first theater design was the City Theatre, built in New York in 1909 for film mogul William Fox. His designs for the 1914 Mark Strand Theatre, the 1916 Rialto Theatre and the 1917 Rivoli Theatre, all in New York's Times Square, set the template for what would become the American Movie Palace. By the 1920s, his movie theater facades were similar to those of his competitors. But his innovative, robust classical facades of white terra cotta erected in the 1910s, remain quite distinctive.
[97] The brothers Cornelius W. Rapp and George Leslie Rapp were the named partners of the Chicago architectural firm Rapp and Rapp, one of the leading designers of early twentieth century movie palaces.

and elegantly designed stages framing movie screens.[98] The million dollar Mark Strand Theatre in New York City designed by Thomas Lamb that opened in 1914 was one of the first lavish purpose-built movie palaces designed to show motion pictures. The theater accommodated 3,300 seats, a thirty-piece orchestra, popcorn vending machines, and uniformed ushers with "light wands."[99] Of note was the first significant fusion of music with high class moving pictures. To manage the theater, the owners hired showman Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel whose luxurious style of presenting films became the benchmark for other movie palaces of the era. Rothafel became one of the most well-known motion picture theater managers and consultants in the nation. His innovations in movie theater programming and the opening of first-run feature films in movie palaces occurred as early as 1916 in major cities.[100]

The Strand Theater served as a model for many other similar theaters built at the time through the innovative imitation of its stage settings, use of an orchestra, lighting effects, and interpolation of ballet and concert numbers with the showing of a feature length film. The Roxy[101] Theater, also in New York City, featured a fifteen-member orchestra on its stage, 6,250 seats, a permanent *corps de ballet,* and grossed $150,000 a week.[102] Of note was the introduction of a two-hour program format.

The rise of the movie palace coincided with the arrival of the feature-length film. Compared with the one reel movie, the first-run, feature film shown in movie palaces rose to become one of the "allied arts," a new art genre dedicated to move and uplift the audience.[103] After World War I, they became the prototype for movie exhibition that would last through the twentieth century. The multi-reel feature film was to the early movie picture theater what an all-star theatrical production was to the opera house theater circuit or the star act on the vaudeville circuit. As a result of the feature film, movie palace show openings garnered tremendous press coverage just as the gala opening of new operas had in the past. Newspaper critics commented on performances as well as the theater's interior design and the quality of the orchestra and the stage shows preceding the films. The film itself became one element of an ". . .evening's entertainment that ultimately combined a prologue performance, newsreels, a stage act, a motion picture short, and live music."[104]

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[98] Melnick and Fuchs, 29.
[99] Ibid., 27.
[100] Ibid., 27- 30.
[101] Named after Rothafel.
[102] Burchard and Bush-Brown, 324.
[103] Melnick and Fuchs, 29.
[104] Ibid., 43.

New purpose-built deluxe movie theaters sprang up across the country. In particular, the major studios, such as Paramount and RKO, quickly erected lavish movie palaces in New York and Los Angeles that premiered their feature films and showed only first-run, feature films. By 1920, the first-run theater itself was part of the show and the basis of promotion of movies throughout the nation.

In the 1930s, the advent of sound and the disappearance of stage shows reflected the end of the era of exhibitors like Balaban and Katz,[105] Roxy, Grauman, Franklin, Riesenfeld, and others who left a legacy of lavish architectural landmarks unique to the cities of the nation.[106] However, during this period some of the most iconic movie palaces emerged – the Art Deco movie palaces. During the 1930s, Art Deco replaced other styles of theater architecture to become the standard in movie palace architecture. The first Art Deco palace, designed in 1930 by Marcus Priteca, was the Hollywood Pantages at Hollywood and Vine in Los Angeles.[107]

These movie palaces reflect an era when the emergence of the Modern Movement style when design became highly stylized and beautifully ornamented. They featured complex stylized painted designs, and it is not uncommon for the auditoria to have a theme, such as an Egyptian design motif. Although simpler in design and interior treatments, the Art Deco movie palace was not a departure from the traditional movie palace genre. Radio City Music Hall was and is one of the most impressive displays of Art Deco architecture, its grand scale an affirmation of the culture of the 1920s movie palace.[108]

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[105] The Balaban and Katz Theatre Corporation appeared in 1916 in Chicago owned by A.J. and Barney Balaban and Sam and Morris Katz. Famous Players-Lasky Corporation bought a controlling interest in Balaban and Katz Corporation in 1926. The company officially dissolved as an Illinois corporation on July 31, 1970. Balaban and Katz chose to build their theaters — many designed by famous Chicago architects Rapp and Rapp — in downtown areas and in rapidly growing outlying districts convenient for the middle-class population which provided the bulk of their patrons. The company was the first to offer air conditioning in its theaters and to provide lavish stage shows. The successful Balaban and Katz chain operated over one hundred theaters in the Midwest including more than fifty in Chicago. In 1926, the corporation merged with Paramount and became the Publix theater chain. Four years later it became the Paramount-Publix Corporation. Barney Balaban, became Paramount's president in 1936, A. J. Balaban eventually supervised all stage production nationwide and produced talkie shorts, and Sam Katz ran the Paramount-Publix theatre chain from New York City. The company purchased, operated and sold movie theaters in Iowa, including the Paramount in Cedar Rapids.

[106] Melnick and Fuchs, 75.

[107] *The Thirties: Depression and Art Deco*, http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/palace/thirties.html (accessed November 1, 2010).

[108] Ibid.

The earliest and a relatively modest example of early movie palaces in Iowa is the 1,100 seat Englert Theater that opened in downtown Iowa City on September 26, 1912. Erected at a cost of $60,000 and designed by the noted Chicago architectural firm of Rapp and Rapp, the local newspaper applauded its presence:

> *The theatrical world has seen beauty knocking at its doors, and received a royal welcome. W. H. Englert has evidenced his wideawake[sic] uptodateness [sic], by erecting a 20th century playhouse bearing his name, to be dedicated during the current week. Iowa has nothing finer, size considered*[109]

As did some of the studio-owned movie palaces in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, Iowa's movie palaces continued to show live theater and variety acts as accoutrements to the feature film. Vaudeville touring acts performed at the Englert. However, the Englert also boasted high quality projection equipment for showing three-reel films. A 1917 photo posted on-line on Google Images[110] indicates an elaborate interior design by Rapp and Rapp that included a decorative plaster work proscenium, a balcony and box seats on the ground floor and balconies flanking the stage. On February 13, 1926, a fire destroyed the interior of the theater. Des Moines architects, Vorse, Kraetsch and Kraetsch directed the immediate renovation.

It was not until the 1920s that the movie palace enjoyed its greatest period of popularity in Iowa. The Chicago architectural firm of Rapp and Rapp played a significant role in the design of the state's movie palaces. Commissions also included: the Capitol Theater, erected in 1920 in Davenport for the Dubinsky Brothers' chain of theaters and the Renaissance Revival style Orpheum Theater erected in 1927 in Sioux City.[111] Erected at a cost of $1.75 million, the Orpheum Theater was one of the largest theaters in Iowa at its time. It boasted a large 2,650 seat, three-story auditorium complete with a Wurlitzer pipe organ, half-circle boxes, hand-carved and gilded ornamentation, crystal chandeliers and a decorative ceiling.[112]

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[109] *Iowa City Daily Press* (23 September 1912). In keeping with a common pattern in both cities and rural communities, the Englert family lived on the second floor of the theater building. They also provided rooms for the performers on the third floor.

[110] Exploding kinetoscopre.blogspot.com (accessed January 13, 2011).

[111] The Orpheum Theater was part of the Orpheum Circuit (later RKO studio).

[112] State Historical Society of Iowa. Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, "Kahl Building/Capitol Theatre." Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet. Site # 82-002-8. 1982. Des Moines, Iowa; and United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. "New Orpheum Theatre." National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. 2000. Washington, D.C.

Two movie palaces that opened in 1928 joined a number of smaller theaters and vaudeville houses in Cedar Rapids. Both of these large theaters were incorporated within large, multi-story office building blocks, had ownership associations with leading movie studios, boasted the latest conveniences, and were architect-designed showplaces conceived to rival their counterparts in the nation's largest cities. Both the Iowa Theater and the Paramount[113] Theater provided the latest in technology for the exhibition of silent movies. They both hosted live stage shows and music provided both by pit orchestras and pipe organs designed specifically for each venue.

The Iowa Theater originally seated approximately 1,800 patrons. The lobby opened directly onto the main foyer at the back of a highly ornamented auditorium (glitter blown through a straw onto wet plaster walls was only one of a number of decorative treatments). A staircase in the foyer led to the balcony foyer, with access directly into the loge section of the balcony. Secondary staircases led directly into the aisles of the upper tiers of the balcony. Furnished with ornate antiques, the theater centerpiece was a Barton theater organ that dominated the orchestra pit. Black velvet covered in glitter covered the organ console. Thousands of rhinestones trimmed all the console edges, and two large diamond-shaped panels imbedded with hundreds of rhinestones flanked the fallboard above the manuals. As a prelude to the feature movie, live acts were performed in front of the silent movie screen to the accompaniment of organ music. One of the theater's most spectacular features was a three-story blade sign in the shape of an ear of corn illuminated by hundreds of colored light bulbs and set at a 45-degree angle at the corner of the building.[114]

The Paramount Theater, located a short distance away, presented an imposing edifice, and was larger and more lavish than the Iowa, seating 2,000 in air-conditioned comfort. The lobby opened into a large mirrored passage with high ceilings, patterned after the Hall of Mirrors at the *Palace de Versailles*. The mirrors reflected ornate, cut-glass chandeliers. At the far end of the mirrored hall was a grand staircase. Patrons could either turn left into another large ornate hallway, or proceed up the grand staircase to the balcony. The grand staircase also accessed the multi-level theater foyers, nearly a block away from the point of entry. A second grand staircase connected the main floor and balcony level foyers. From the

[113] Originally named the Capitol in 1928, the name changed a year later upon purchase of the theater by Paramount Studio from the Publix/Balaban and Katz movie theater chain.

[114] David C. Kezenberg, "Wind on the Prairie: Pipe Organs in Cedar Rapids," http://www.albany.edu/piporg-l/FS/dk.html (accessed May 31, 2010). Revised version of the article originally published in *Theatre Organ, the Journal of the American Theatre Organ Society* (July/August 1998).

balcony foyer, another set of grand staircases ascended, to another entire full-width foyer leading to the upper balcony. Every passageway, foyer, and staircase suggested luxury through liberal use of sculpture and oil paintings.[115]

It is important to note that the movie palace era cannot be categorized only by the elaborate architectural plans and designs of Thomas Lamb, John Eberson, Rapp and Rapp, and the other top theater architects of their day. Each city and state had a unique collection and all of these theaters operated differently in many important ways. Those that housed traveling stage shows were exceptional based on their size and the nature of their audience. Those with smaller auditoria but imposing edifices and plans and designs, set them apart from the mainstream Commercial Block Downtown and neighborhood Movie Houses. The remaining movie palaces of Iowa are the most lasting testament to this era of motion picture history.

COMMUNITY VALUES: CENSORSHIP AND BLUE LAWS

With the arrival of movies in the United States in 1896, came moral critics. In 1906, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) began a crusade for government regulations of films, condemning the harmful influence of movies on impressionable youth, claiming the films to be addictive, and a contributor to crime and delinquency. Concerns about the influences of locally unlicensed movies continued to be the topic of newspaper articles well in to the 1920s, when movie theaters typically represented standard middle-class entertainment. The *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette* reported in its April 30, 1921, Saturday edition that local ministers felt that movies (and fraternal meetings) were one of the chief reasons for lack of home life.[116] The *Adams County Free Press* reported in their April 16, 1929 edition that a three week church meeting campaign in Corning focused on the sorrow that follows the trail of three amusements – cards, "racy indecent" movies, and dancing.[117]

The conflict of community values and control of local taste in comparison to national preferences was important and problematic to both the movie studio and the small independent theater operators. Prior to the advent of studio domination of distribution of films, the local owner of the theater controlled what live

[115] Ibid.
[116] *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, 30 April 1921. Accessed from Newspaperarchive.com.
[117] "Talks About Evil Influences," *Adams County Free Press*, 26 April 1929. Accessed from Newspaperarchive.com.

entertainment companies booked shows, acts, and silent movies, subjectively determining what entertainment offerings reflected community mores.[118]

In 1907, the City of Chicago enacted the first movie censorship law in America. Two years later, the Protestant National Board of Censorship formed in response to "indecent" films. In the following years, both cities and states created local censorship boards that imposed a variety of rules and standards. In 1915, in *Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio,* the Supreme Court ruled that movies were not protected by the First Amendment. The ruling allowed state and local boards to continue censoring films. Among the films censored that year at the behest of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and others was *Birth of a Nation,* D.W. Griffith's film about the Civil War and Reconstruction.

In 1922, the major American movie studios founded the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA),[119] with former U.S. Postmaster General Will H. Hays as its head. The organization, formed in response to public criticism against indecency in movies, increasing government censorship of films, and scandals involving motion-picture celebrities, was little more than a trade association designed to advance the business interests of the movie studios. After screening films, corporate analysts subjectively assigned one of five ratings. The organization's ratings carried no force of local, state, or federal law. However, theater owners had to agree to enforce MPAA film ratings in order to acquire new film releases. In 1927, independent film exhibitors, frustrated with studio rules and lack of control over what films they could exhibit, formed the Allied States Association to lobby with other critics for government regulation of film exhibition. In partial response, in 1933, the studios adopted *A Code to Maintain Social and Community Values in the Production of Silent, Synchronized and Talking Motion Pictures,* also called the Hays Code. Studios administered the Hays Code censorship system from 1930 to 1968. [120]

Many states had statutes prohibiting obscene or indecent theatrical performances generally, most of which were passed prior to the advent of movie theaters. Prior to 1935, a few state statutes referred specifically

[118] Putnam, 5-6.
[119] It later became the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) in 1935.
[120] "Film Censorship: An Administrative Analysis," *Columbia Law Review,* Vol. 39, No. 8 (Dec., 1939), http://www.jstor.org/stable/1116646 (accessed September 15, 2010).

to motion pictures, both in general categorical prohibitions and in bans on specified types of films.[121] For example, the State of Iowa's only restrictions at that time relating to exhibition of films was to prohibit showing films of prize fights.[122]

Governmental censorship of movies in Iowa, as in most other states, occurred most often on the local level as the result of state enabling legislation that expressly delegated to municipalities the power to legislate regarding film content referring either to motion pictures specifically or to theatrical performances general.[123] In Iowa, municipal ordinances relating to exhibition and advertising of films could be determined by popular vote. Municipal censorship devices varied. Cities as varied as Chicago, Illinois; Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, established large censorship boards that met regularly.[124] Other cities such as Indianola, Iowa (in 1919), passed ordinances requiring movie picture theaters to be licensed and forbidding exhibition of movies and advertising that tended to corrupt the morals of youth. The penalty for exhibition of movies which did not meet community standards was revocation of a theater license and/or a fine.[125]

Unsuccessful legislation to further extend censorship occurred frequently, such as the legislative attempts in 1938 and 1939 to set up state censor boards in Arkansas, Delaware, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, and Oklahoma.[126] In 1952, the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Joseph Burstyn v. Wilson*, severely limited the legal standing of state and local censorship boards. The Court overturned its 1915 decision and ruled that ". . . expression by means of motion pictures is included within the free speech and free press guaranty of the First and Fourteenth Amendments." On November 1, 1968, MPAA's first voluntary movie classification system replaced the Motion Picture Production Code. The new classification system assigned a rating to a movie based on the movie's content and the way that content was handled.[127]

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[121] Ibid., 1386, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1116646 (accessed September 15, 2010).
[122] Ibid., 1387.
[123] Ibid., 1384. Only seven states: Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, set up official film censorship boards; see also *City of Ames v. Gerbracht*, 194 Iowa 267, 189 N.W. 729 (1922).
[124] Ibid., 1386.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid., 1390.
[127] "Movie Censorship – A Brief History," *The History of Motion Pictures* (Key Light Enterprises, LLC, 2007) http//www.pictureshowman.com/articles_genhist_censorhsip.cfm (accessed October 31, 2010).

Blue Laws: Sunday Movie Exhibition Controversy

Respectability was an early concern of movie theater operators. Fort Dodge's first movie theater, the Lyric, billed itself as a "Picture Parlor" to give an air of respectability even if it offended local propriety when it dared show films on Sunday. This caused a problem. As one native noted, "Fort Dodge was a tough town . . . you didn't violate the Sabbath with movies."[128]

The controversy over motion picture exhibition on Sundays in Iowa was a local concern until the administration of Attorney General H. M. Havner, who served as the state's chief legal official from 1917 to 1921. A review of movie advertisements dating prior to that time in newspapers[129] indicates that legitimate theater, vaudeville, nickelodeons, and moving picture theaters all had Sunday matinee and/or evening performances through 1917. Havner, a Republican, made his legal career specializing in what was then called prohibitive law. In particular, he engaged in law cases dealing with the outlawing of saloons and interpretation of enforcement of Iowa's Sunday Closing Law. The crux of the legal issue in Iowa was, given the statutory local option powers relating to theaters to determine exceptions to the Sunday Closing Law, under what jurisdiction local government regulation of this and other Sunday activities could occur; of particular importance was the question of the requirement of a vote of the local electorate.[130] Those supporting local control held that the Iowa statutes gave express permission to cities to regulate all theaters (and thus applied to regulation of what movie exhibition activities were subject to the Sunday Closing Law). The Attorney General held that decisions of municipal courts on such matters were not binding on his office and the issue was whether the showing of movies involved only charitable or "necessary" labor as permitted under the state's Sunday Closing Law. Confusion also occurred as to whether the interpretation of the law was consistent in what forms of Sunday entertainment were allowed: the attorney general forbade movies but allowed band concerts. Tangled in these interpretations were the issues of due process and the role of the electorate in establishing local laws that departed from the interpretations of the Iowa Attorney General.

Added to the legal, political, and economic issues attached to Sunday exhibition of movies were the religious issues raised by various denominations and individual churches, (e.g. the *Oelwein Daily*

[128] Madsen.
[129] Newspaperarchive.com
[130] David N. Laband and Deborah Hendry Heinbuch, *Blue Laws: The History, Economics, and Politics of Sunday-Closing Laws* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1987).

Register headline of May 1922, "Movies May be an Issue with Presbyterians"). As a result, between 1917 and 1924, a number of cases made their way through Iowa's courts.

The response to Attorney General Havner's efforts to shut down movie exhibition on Sunday was immediate. The May 12, 1917 edition of the *Des Moines News* reported that the Association of Independent Theater Owners had banded together with owners of confectionary shops, and cigar and drug stores to make a test case in whether their businesses came under the state's Sunday closing laws. The association also stated a goal to make the closing laws unpopular through a variety of public relations efforts. Five of the city's principal theaters agreed to remain open as a legal test case and seek injunctions against their closing. Each theater planned to feature a different type of entertainment using a specific movie to test particularities of the state law -- from presenting movies as part of a Chautauqua, as a motion picture private fund-raiser, and the showing of patriotic and religious films. By October, Des Moines theater owner A.H. Blank continued showing movies on Sundays based on his attorney's interpretation of state statutes. Within the next few years, the issue of the exhibition of movies on Sunday resulted in a number of narrowly interpreted case-by-case decisions. Evidently the theater owners association in Des Moines prevailed, as indicated in advertisements in the Des Moines newspapers in 1920, which show movies being exhibited on Sundays.

The debate, nevertheless, continued after Havner's term of office in the exercise of local option statutes. The *Cedar Rapids Republican and Times* in March 30, 1922 ran the headline "Advocates of Open Sunday Win a Sweeping Victory at Williamsburg" about the triumph of those supporting Sunday movie exhibition. During the same month, a spirited city council election occurred in Ames. Candidates ran on two tickets: one supporting Sunday movies and one supporting the local churches' crusade against Sunday movies. College students who could not vote passed petitions supporting Sunday movies.[131]

The *Adams County Free Press* in "Corning Not Alone," published December 20, 1924, reported that the town's movie theater owner had been arrested and fined for showing a movie on Sunday and intended to appeal to the Iowa Supreme Court as being singled out as a newspaper publisher that supported a Democrat in a local election. At the same time, other communities discontinued Sunday movie shows until there was an interpretation of the state's Blue Laws as applying to movie theaters in regard to the U.S. Constitution's equal protection provisions.[132]

[131] "Hot Fight in Ames," *Adams County Free Press* (23 March 1922). Accessed from Newspaperarchive.com.
[132] "Corning Not Alone," *Adams County Free Press* (20 December 1924). Accessed from Newspaperarchive.com.

Five years later, the *Adams County Free Press* article "To Vote on Sunday Movies, March 18." sheds light on the legal and political process, which evidently allowed municipalities, by public vote, to settle the issue of Sunday Closing Laws in regard to movie exhibition. The article noted that it was the second time the issue had come to a local vote in five years and the movie theater owner had agreed to abide by the decision of the voters. The theater owner argued that there was a new trend toward Sunday amusement as a result of moving pictures establishing themselves as an important part of community life due to higher standards demonstrated in the past decade. He also stated that "practically all the towns containing movie pictures in this part of Iowa and, in fact the state, have Sunday movies."[133] From this period on, it appears from reviewing various sources that the exhibition of movies on Sunday was a local option.

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MOVIE EXPERIENCE IN IOWA

Iowa's African American population has never been large in comparison with the state's larger Euro-American and native-born white population. Beginning in 1850, the number of African American residents in Iowa grew each decade except for the period from 1920 to 1940. Their population in the state first exceeded 1,000 in the 1860 census. Thirty years later the number exceeded 10,000. The 1920 census lists the group's state-wide population at 19,000. By the end of the Great Depression, that number declined to less than 17,000. Post-World War II gains prior to the passage of federal Civil Rights legislation affecting public accommodations and its implementation included 5,700 in the 1950s and 7,200 in the 1960s.[134] Settlement patterns indicate that the majority of the state's African American population (64 percent in 1900; 90 percent in 1940) settled in communities with a population that exceeded 2,500.

Iowa's first African American residents were slaves illegally brought by Euro-Americans into the territory the 1830s. A small number arrived to escape slavery. By the 1840s, they found employment in the Dubuque area lead mines and as deckhands in the river towns of Burlington, Davenport, Keokuk, and Sioux City. Some owned or found work on farms. In the mid-1860s, African Americans worked for railroad companies laying track, and later as waiters and porters on the railway cars. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, many moved from rural areas to towns and cities where they worked as

[133] "To Vote on Sunday Movies, March 18," *Adams County Free Press* (8 March 1929). Accessed from Newspaperarchive.com.
[134] Bill Silag, ed., *Outside In: African American History in Iowa, 1838-2000* (Des Moines: State Historical Society of Iowa, 2001), 28.

hotel porters, doormen, waiters, cooks, maids and barbers. Some started their own businesses. A small number received the education to gain professional status of doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, and school teachers.[135]

In the first decades of the twentieth century, most of the male African Americans in the state worked as coal miners and lived with their families near the mines in southern and central areas of the state. The largest of these communities was Buxton, a company town established in 1900 by the Consolidated Coal Company. Of the estimated 5,000 people living in Buxton in the 1905, more than half were African American. When the coal mines near Buxton closed in the early 1920s, many of the town's black residents moved to larger communities such as Waterloo and Des Moines. Another major black migration to Iowa occurred around 1911 when the Illinois Central Railroad offered of free passage and jobs at the railroad's maintenance and repair shops in Waterloo during a strike. By 1920, the town's population included 856 African Americans recruited from the South. Des Moines' large African American population grew out of the designation of Fort Des Moines as the site of the Colored Officers Training Camp in 1917; after the end of the war the next year, many remained with their families.[136]

Public Accommodations Law and Practices

People of color in Iowa, as elsewhere, did not have the same movie experiences as the white population. Despite civil rights legislation in Iowa in 1884 allowing all persons to enjoy full and equal enjoyment of public accommodations (including the specific denotation of theaters), a 1913 court ruling supported a movie theater owner's denial of the right of a black to select his/her own seat location.[137]
Segregation in public accommodations continued to be the norm in Iowa well into the second half of the twentieth century. Whether it was in restaurants, bars, movie theater seating, hotels, or at drinking

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[135] "Coming to Iowa: Opportunities in the Hawkeye State," *Iowa Pathways*, adapted from an original article by Amy Ruth, *The Goldfinch* 16, No. 4 (Summer 1995). Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa. http://www.iptv.org/iowapathways/mypath.cfm?ounid=ob_000249 (accessed August 25, 2011).

[136] "African-American Communities," *Iowa Pathways*, adapted from original article in *The Goldfinch* 16, No. 4 (Summer 1995). Iowa City: State Historical Society, http://www.iptv.org/iowapathways/mypath.cfm?ounid=ob_000195 (accessed August 25, 2011); and Robert V. Morris, "The Great Buxton" *Iowa Pathways*, http://www.iptv.org/iowapathways/mypath.cfm?ounid=ob_000293 (accessed August 24, 2011).

[137] *Acts and Resolutions Passed at the Regular Session of the Twentieth General Assembly of the State of Iowa* (Des Moines: Geo. E. Roberts, State Printer, 1884), 107 (Chapter 105) and "Movie Man Freed in Color Case," *Des Moines News*, 27 June 1913.

fountains, white business owners and government entities routinely denied physically-shared public accommodations to blacks, relegating them to a realm as second-class citizens. Iowa courts routinely interpreted the legislative intent of the 1884 Act narrowly and excluded any facilities or practices not specifically listed in the legislation. It was not until 1949 that the Iowa Supreme Court upheld a broad interpretation of the state's only civil rights legislation.[138]

In the early 1960s, throughout the United States students and civil rights organizations alike, forced the issue of segregation into the public arena. Over the course of eighteen months, the sit-in movement attracted over 70,000 participants and generated over three thousand arrests in the name of equal protection under the law. As a result of these and other civil rights efforts, the Civil Rights Act, passed by Congress in 1964, included provisions outlawing discrimination in public accommodations.[139]

Title II of the Civil Rights Act required that restaurants, hotels, theaters, sales or rental services, health care providers, transportation hubs, and other service venues, such as movie theaters, afford to all people "full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, [and] facilities" without discrimination or segregation. The new federal law prohibited privately owned facilities from discriminating on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin.

Addressing segregation in public accommodations in 1964 was particularly controversial because the ruling on the 1883 civil rights cases,[140] which held that Congress lacked the power to enforce the equal protection guarantees under the Fourteenth Amendment, and ruled that the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which guaranteed that everyone, regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, the same treatment in public accommodations, was unconstitutional.

Instead of addressing the federal court's interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment, Congress used its constitutional authority over interstate commerce to authorize the 1964 Civil Rights Act due to Congress'

[138] The court upheld the prosecution of the manager of the Katz Drug Store in Des Moines for denying service at the lunch counter to African Americans. Members of the community responded with sit-ins and picketing of local lunch counters that refused service based on race.

[139] Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, "Public Accommodations," *Long Road to Justice: The Civil Rights Division at 50.* http:///www.civilrights.org/publications/reports/long-road/accommodtions.html (accessed 31 May 2010).

[140] The *1883 Civil Rights Cases*, 109 U.S. 3 (1883), were a group of five similar cases consolidated into one issue for the United States Supreme Court to review.

legal ability to intercede in the buying, selling, and trading of services. The same year the Civil Rights Act passed, the Supreme Court upheld Title II. The Department of Justice, having prevailed in these cases, continued a vigorous enforcement program throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s.[141]

In Iowa, as in other states, the motion picture industry was segregated in the production, distribution and exhibition of movies. By the 1920s, the great African American migration from the rural south to northern industrial cities changed the dynamics of the black community. Where once there were isolated pockets of residences and corner shops in cities and towns, now there were approximately 400 theaters in black communities in the U.S. dedicated exclusively to African American audiences and performances.

However, in Iowa, as in other states, the democratic myth of the movie palace for all classes did not extend to the black community and other people of color. From hiring practices at theaters, to production in movies, the treatment of blacks, Asians, and Hispanics did not erase the color line within cities both south and north of the Mason-Dixon Line.[142] In large cities, black movie theaters located within black communities were similar to theaters for Caucasian audiences in many ways and arose from a long and strong tradition of black theater in the United States.

African American Film Making and Exhibition Venues

There were very few black-managed live theater venues before 1900; by 1910, the *Indianapolis Freeman* recorded that there were fifty-three theaters owned by blacks in the United States with the large majority (forty-two) in the south.[143] Theaters for African Americans, whether erected by blacks or whites, were built as real estate investments. Initially they were cheaply built and often uncomfortable for audience and performers.

Black American filmmaking began to take shape in the beginning of the twentieth century in response to the bigotry of D.W. Griffith's early feature-length film, *The Birth of a Nation*, and the demand created by the large number of blacks settling in major cities in the North. After the *Birth of a Nation*, it was apparent to blacks that the only way to combat the treatment of racism in movies would be for African American entrepreneurs to produce black movies and distribute them among black-owned theater circuits.

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[141] Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, “Public Accommodations,”
[142] Melnick and Fuchs, 70.
[143] Thomas L. Riis, *Black Vaudeville, the TOBA and the Morton Theater: Recovering the History 1910-1930* (Self-published, 1987), 14.

In 1911, the first black movie circuit organized; eight theaters that composed the initial circuit grew in five years to nineteen. As a black urban population developed, so did a market for black films. Independent black filmmakers began, in the early twentieth century, to produce a variety of works that would appeal to black audiences.

Research has revealed little about the presence of African American-owned movie theaters in Iowa. It was rare in the early twentieth century to find a black community outside Iowa's major towns and cities such as Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, Davenport, Fort Dodge, and Sioux City, which were large enough to support an African American-owned movie theater exhibiting movies written and produced by African Americans and featuring black actors. However, the availability of these films, distributed on a circuit of such offerings from nearby cities such as Kansas City and St. Louis begs the question as to if and where the exhibition of these films occurred in Iowa. Bob Wilson, a resident of Des Moines' west side and son of a real estate developer, sheds some light on the question. Wilson noted an oral history tradition of African American movies distributed on the black motion picture circuit shown in the YMCA building in the unincorporated town of Buxton, which had a large black population in the first two decades of the twentieth century.[144]

Segregated Seating

Whites openly supported segregation practices in Iowa long after the enactment of laws prohibiting the practice.[145] Wilson recalls attending the Forest Theater,[146] a west side neighborhood theater in Des Moines, in the 1940s and 1950s. The owner, a white businessman, required blacks to sit in segregated seating in a designated area in the first and second rows on the right side of the theater, a location that presented the film at a bad angle. Wilson noted that the use of designated seating areas was a common practice in all of Des Moines' downtown first-run theaters, either on the main floor or in the balcony. He noted that black neighborhoods in the city lacked neighborhood movie theaters.

Oral history accounts indicate the practice of designated seating in movie theaters in other cities and towns in the state as well. In Mary Harrington's article, "Recalling the Old Days: Iowa Residents Recall Segregation and the Civil Rights Movement," in cbsnews.com, February 11, 2009, Neita Lochran remembers rushing to Iowa City's Englert Theatre to compete for the coveted front row seats, but ". .

[144] Bob Wilson, Des Moines, IA, telephone interview by Sally F. Schwenk, Kansas City, Missouri, 14 July 2010.
[145] Silag, 192.
[146] The theater building at 13th Street and Forest Avenue later served as the meeting rooms of a number of fraternal organizations and currently provides office space.

never understood why the black children who arrived just as early always sat in the balcony, always in the back."[147] Another recollection notes assigned seats for blacks in a corner section in the upper balcony of the movie theater in Fort Madison.[148]

Wilson's recollections and other published accounts note that African Americans performed for white-only audiences in some movie theaters. Theatrical and novelty acts such as the Jolly Entertainers Show, a racially mixed troupe performed on a circuit in the area of Ottumwa to audiences of all races. It is well documented that a variety of musical entertainment occurred in black churches, schools and clubs, including saloons and jazz clubs in the black business districts of the larger communities. It is probable that exhibition of movies produced for and distributed on a circuit to black audiences occurred in these private places within an African American enclave.

The lack of evidence of independent African American movie theaters in Iowa needs to be understood in the context of the typical historical commercial and population patterns found in northern and midwestern cities. In many of Iowa's larger cities and towns, African American communities existed, either by design or custom, as segregated neighborhoods where their residents maintained their own businesses, churches, and social and professional clubs. In addition to the professional services of ministers, educators, physicians, dentists, lawyers, and insurance agents who lived and worked in these neighborhoods, there were African American businesses, such as neighborhood barbershops and hair salons, undertakers, pharmacies, laundries, cafes, and groceries that relied on black patronage. Rarely was a black business found outside Iowa's major towns and cities. In addition to problems faced by all new business owners, African Americans establishing businesses faced racial prejudices, difficulty in obtaining financing, a limited number of black patrons and access to desirable commercial locations. These businesses survived in the first half of the twentieth century because of segregation and the consequent consumer support from within diverse black neighborhoods that included working people, poor people, and the small elite of educated professionals, none of whom were, as a rule, welcome in white business establishments.[149] Sufficient support for an African American movie theater in one of these communities thus depended on a number of factors.

Cedar Rapids was typical in its segregated commercial and residential districts. By 1900, it had a small area where several hundred of the town's black citizens lived. Located nearby were black-owned

[147] See: http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/11/11/politics/uwire/main4591501.shtml (accessed August 24, 2011).
[148] Charlene J. Barns, *Life Narratives of African Americans in Iowa* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing Company, 2001), 81-82.
[149] Siliag, 192.

businesses. Des Moines was, by World War I, the center for black life in Iowa and its African American Center Street neighborhood provided the nucleus for the black commercial, educational, and institutional endeavors. Yet, it appears that the almost universal practice of segregated seating prevailed in the viewing of white productions in white-owned theaters. What is unclear is the viewing of black cinema in private spaces within the African American community.

THE TALKIES

By the late 1920s, the art of silent film was remarkably mature. Although called "silents," they were never really silent but accompanied by sound organs, gramophone discs, musicians, sound effects specialists, live actors who delivered dialogue, and even full-scale orchestras.

Two competing sound/recording systems developed during the early "talkie" period called "sound-on-disc" and "sound-on-film." In 1925-26, the Vitaphone Company, a subsidiary of Warner Brothers and Western Electric, revolutionized the entertainment industry with the development of a synchronized sound system. The system utilized a special turntable and reproducer featuring a mechanical interlock attached to a standard electronic film projector also equipped with a fader, an amplifier, and loudspeaker system. Originally, Warner Bros. intended to use the system to record only music and sound effects - not dialogue. The process was first used for short one- and two-reel films, mostly comedies and vaudeville acts. *Don Juan,* the first feature-length film with synchronized Vitaphone sound effects and pre-recorded musical soundtrack, but without spoken dialogue, premiered in New York in August, 1926.

The same year, Fox Film Corporation[150] responded with Movietone, a sound-on-film process that eventually became the dominant movie sound technology. Fox's Movietone twelve-reel sound movie, *What Price Glory*, premiered in January, 1927. In May, the studio released the first sound news film. In October of that year, Warner Brothers released the first feature-length talkie and first musical, *The Jazz Singer*.[151] Realizing the expense, as well as the financial revolution, sound would bring to the movie

[150] Producer William Fox, who headed the Fox Movie theater chain that operated numerous movie theaters over time in Iowa, initially went into the penny arcade business. He bought movie theater houses in New York and moved into film distribution with the Greater New York Film Rental Co. He launched the Fox production studio in New York with a one-reeler, all before 1912. In 1914, he merged his production, distribution and exhibition interests and, in 1917, Fox Studio moved to Los Angeles. In 1925, Fox pioneered Movietone Sound for newsreels, bought out Loew's Inc. and its production wing, MGM, to integrate his sound system in theaters throughout the United States.

[151] Melnick and Fuchs, 67.

industry, the other major film studios – Paramount, Lowes, First National, and United Artists – signed an agreement with Western Electric to jointly choose a single standardized sound system.[152]

With this in place, the studios began the tremendous capital investment to convert their studios to production of sound movies and the rewiring of thousands of their movie theaters for sound film exhibition. They quickly updated films that began production as silent films into movies with a sound track. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that significant features of a surge in theater building was in response to the development of sound movies and initially occurred in large theaters seating over 1,000, which were then replacing the old style nickelodeon and neighborhood movie houses and the silent movie opera house venues. In 1927, there were only 400 theaters capable of exhibiting sound movies; by the end of the decade, over forty percent (around 9,000) of the country's movie theaters had sound systems. By the mid-1930s, film industry studios were exclusively sound-film factories.[153]

When the Iowa Theater in Cedar Rapids was built in 1928, there were twelve downtown movie theaters showing silent films. Many could not afford the switch when talking pictures came in, so all but a half-dozen closed.[154] Although nationally, the era of conversion to talkies occurred between 1926 and 1930, it proceeded more slowly in Iowa, particularly for locally-owned independent movie theaters.

Robert Fridley recalls in his biography that, in 1929, his uncle installed sound equipment in one of his theaters. Fridley noted at the time there were two systems that were best: Western Electric and RCA *Photophone*. Both were very expensive. Western Electric charged $10,000 to lease their system, an amount at that time that was more than most small-town theaters were worth. His uncle bought a cheaper system, of which there were many, selling for less than a $1,000. It proved so faulty, that the ensuing loss of customers to a neighboring theater prompted him to purchase the expensive RCA system.[155]

Despite the slow process in independent theaters making the costly adjustments to the new sound systems, the immediate impact of sound movies on smaller theaters that installed sound systems was significant. They did not have to wait for feature film musicals, such as the 1929 *The Desert Song*, which

[152] Tim Dirks, "The History of Film: The 1920s - The Pre-talkies and the Silent Era, Part 2" http//www.filmsite.org/20sintro3.html (accessed 31 May 2010).
[153] Ibid., and Melnick and Fuchs, 69.
[154] Kaye Ross, "Cedar Rapids Historic Sites," http://iowa.com/2009/05/historic-sites-of-cedar-rapids/html (accessed October 30 2010).
[155] Fridley.

played at the Paramount in Des Moines[156] and included parts filmed in two-color Technicolor process. For the local theater which had sound, Warner Brothers produced "shorts" as well as feature films to meet the public demand. The short films allowed independent movie owners and small town exhibitors to show a short recorded film along with a vaudeville performance prior to showing the feature movie.[157]

The Rise of the B Movie[158]

In 1928, near the end of the silent film era, the production cost of an average feature film by a major studio averaged around $200,000. This average reflected both first-run feature films that might cost as much as $1 million and films with short production time for around $50,000. The production and distribution of a greater number of less expensive movies along with a lesser number of first-run films created an economy of scale for studios with a large overhead, kept contracted actors busy between major productions; and served as a vetting system for new actors, directors, writers, and other film professionals. Moreover, studios with less capitalization, such as Columbia Pictures, specialized in the more inexpensive productions. Their movies, with relatively short running times, targeted the small-town and urban neighborhood market that had to economize on rental and operating costs.[159]

With the widespread arrival of sound film in American theaters in 1929, many independent exhibitors began dropping the live acts and the broad variety of movie shorts presented before the screening of the feature film. A new standard "presentation" programming evolved: a newsreel, a short and/or a serial, and a cartoon, followed by a double feature. The short "B" feature, which actually screened before the main event, cost the exhibitor less per minute than short subject films. Moreover, the growing control of the major studios to exhibit their films only at affiliated theaters limited the independent studio owner's ability to compete with quality feature films. The addition of a second feature B movie allowed theater owners to provide quantity over quality by pairing different sorts of features, thus appealing to a broader audience. By the 1930s, the low-budget picture of the 1920s had evolved into the second feature, the B movie.[160]

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[156] Ibid.
[157] Melnick and Fuchs, 69.
[158] It is not clear that the term *B movie* (or *B film* or *B picture*) was in general use before the 1930s.
[159] Brian Taves, "The B Film: Hollywood's Other Half," in *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise 1930-1939 by Tino Balio* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 320.
[160] Joel W Finler, *The Hollywood Story* (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2003), 26, 41-43,47-49.

COLOR AND THE WIDE SCREEN

By 1930, as the talking picture arrived at theaters throughout the country, the studios had produced sixty feature films in full color, or included color sequences in films. Wide-screen technology also occurred at this time. However, the exhibitors of small and large movie theaters, struggling to finance installation of new sound equipment, delayed wide screen technology for the next twenty years.[161]

In 1915, the Technicolor Motion Picture Corporation developed a two-color negative system to colorize motion pictures. The first two-color Technicolor production was in 1917, and the first commercial two-color Technicolor feature followed in 1922. By 1932, Walt Disney won an Oscar for Best Short Film-Cartoon using a richer three-color process developed by Technicolor. In 1935, RKO produced the first feature-length, three-strip (color) Technicolor movie, *Becky Sharp*.[162]

STATE-WIDE IMPACT OF ERA OF CENTRALIZATION AND DOMINATION OF MOVIE THEATER CHAINS: 1920 – 1948

EARLY FILM EXCHANGES

Initially, distributors of films — middlemen selling for the studio to the exhibitor — sold, sight-unseen films to theater owner/exhibitors. The films were not returnable or refundable. In the first decades of the twentieth century a fifteen-meter reel of film could cost around $25.00. If properly maintained, the print would last through at least 300 showings. The purchase of film left exhibitors with large collections of old films, which they often sold to theater owners out of their region.[163]

By 1910, as movie exhibition continued to expand, a change in distribution occurred with the establishment of “exchanges” between producers and exhibitors, such as the owners of nickelodeons, opera houses, and vaudeville theaters that featured silent movies. At this time, approximately forty “film exchanges” operated in sales regions in the United States and engaged in the practice of renting or trading

[161] Dirks.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Max Alvarez, “The Origins of the Film Exchange,” *Film History: The International Journal* 17, no. 4 (2005): 431-465), http:/www.muse/hu.edu/login?uri=/journals/film_history/vo17/17.4alverez.html.

motion pictures.[164] Most exchanges were located in Chicago, where two-thirds of the movies in the United States were distributed and where several producers maintained studios through the next decade. New York was second in the number of exchanges in the pre-World War I era.[165]

During this period film exchanges rented films to theaters at so much per week for "film services" which consisted of furnishing three to five films each day, which changed daily or every other day, or twice a week.[166] The exchanges utilized catalogues and bought their films outright from the studios, paying so much per foot.[167] There were two classes of films to choose from: those made by the film association manufacturers which included the major studios handled by the General Film Exchange, and those made by independent manufacturers handled by the independent exchanges. An exhibitor had to choose between the two. Usually the types or brand of films which appealed best to the exhibitor's clientele determined which of the two types of film exchanges a movie theater owner/exhibitor chose.[168]

Initially there were three major types of film services provided by the exchanges: those for "high class theaters," "ordinary houses" or "cheap houses."[169] The exchanges rented out a given film many times; the same film could be exhibited in twenty-six different movie houses in one month. The house getting it first paid a higher price for the least amount of wear and tear than the house getting it the twenty-fifth or even the fiftieth time. A film being exhibited for the first time was called a first-run film and the date of the first appearance of all films was called the *release date*. When exhibited the second time, it was called a *second-run film*. After the sixth run, the exchange kept no record of further use.[170]

The cost of the exchange's film service to a given movie theater also depended on how many films the theater *programme* required. A nickelodeon typically booked seven, one-reel films each day which required at least forty or more reels on a weekly basis. This practice depleted the supply of new subjects

[164] Ibid., 433. Films purchased by film exchanges directly from studios could also be resold, as no patent or copyrights prevailed.
[165] Ibid.
[166] James F. Hodges, *Opening and Operating a Motion Picture Theater: How It's Done Successfully* (New York, NY: Scenario Publishing Company, 1912), 13. Digital Copy Microsoft Corporation. http//www.archiveorg/details/openingoperating/00hodgesrich[1].pdf (accessed October 2010)
[167] Before serving exclusively as film clearing houses, exchanges also functioned as full-service stores for theater owners/managers.
[168] Hodges, 15.
[169] Ibid, 13.
[170] Ibid.

and required the exchange to substitute older films.[171] One film might be a week old; the next, three weeks old; and the third might be three months old.[172] Thus, age as well as number of runs determined the cost of monthly services provided by the film exchange to a given movie theater.

During the pre-war development of the movie film distribution system, American movie theater owners followed the popular exhibition practices of Europe; American movie theater owners began to experiment in the extended run feature film. Initially, the movie theater operators in the pre-World War I era obtained these films through special feature film companies or rented some through film exchanges. Prominent feature films were produced by the Famous Players Film Company[173] and Warner's Feature Film Company.[174]

As demand increased, particularly that fed by the nickelodeon theaters, film exchange businesses located offices in multiple territories, often creating a network across the country. Every film exchange needed to purchase several copies of every new release in order to meet exhibitor demands. In Iowa, Des Moines became the regional distribution location of some studios, and of local and national independent film exchanges, as well as exchanges buying and selling movie posters and advertising materials specific to certain films and studios.

In an intensely competitive environment, exhibitors developed special relations with specific exchanges, even demanding to screen a reel in advance of release. Relations between motion picture exchange salesmen and cinema operators/exhibitors were always strained, and aggravated by inefficient systems of distribution.[175] The exchange system over time became more sophisticated and developed a corporate structure dependent on an organizational arm that booked and delivered the rented films, an administrative bookkeeping arm, and a marketing arm, all reporting to a branch manager.[176] At the same time, independent theater ownership groups formed and created a chain store strategy of regional theater circuits with centralized management that handled, among other business-related tasks, the booking of movies. The organized clout of an independent broker who represented numerous owners of small theater

[171] Alvarez, 438.
[172] Hodges, 15.
[173] The Famous Players Film Company was the precursor to Paramount Studios.
[174] Hodges, 16-17.
[175] Alvarez. 441.
[176] Ibid., 444.

operations became an important component of the movie industry in Iowa. In particular, the independent chains had the power to boycott movie studio offerings that might not play well locally.

RISE OF THE INDEPENDENT THEATER OWNER CHAINS

As the studio-owned theater distribution system became established, independent exhibitors, in an effort to save costs and increase negotiating power with the studios, began regional movie house chains of their own. The most important component of these circuits was centralized ownership/management of six or more theaters. The independent chains' headquarters office coordinated marketing, booked special acts and movies, and determined exhibition times and location.

The impact of the organization of independent theater owners can initially be seen in the unsuccessful efforts of studio production interests in Chicago and New York to collaborate to license movie distribution exchanges and nickelodeon theaters. After this approach failed, the studio interests tried to form a company to purchase every available film exchange in the United States to control all aspects of distribution. The effort failed when select groups of producers and exchange operators broke rank to form their own rival alliances. Many moved to the West where their studio businesses gradually metamorphosed into the major Hollywood studios.[177] These studio interests did not initially have centralized operations, but acted as releasing companies for their films and for independent film-making groups whose films they sold outright to franchisees in various territories. Gradually distributors such as Universal and Paramount began taking control of both production of films and managing exchange franchises to create the monolithic Hollywood film companies that emerged in the post-World War I era.[178]

In Iowa, independent movie theater operators represented by independent regional movie theater owner chains varied considerably. Listings of members are not readily available. A review of chains listed on-line is limited, but shows considerable change in ownership of theaters in the 1930s and their affiliations with independent chains constantly shifting with sales of theater buildings. This is particularly true in the 1970s through 2000. Each chain responded to the issues of the time. No one chain or consortium of independent chains played a dominant role outside its role in negotiating booking of films in blocks for its members and later political efforts to break the monopoly of the studio distribution system.

[177] Ibid., 443.
[178] Ibid.

VERTICAL INTEGRATION SYSTEM

One impact in Iowa related to the rise of motion picture studio-owned movie theaters were changes to the movie distribution system under what became known as the Vertical Integration Concept. Two factors contributed to the system which dominated movie exhibition beginning in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The first was the rise of the studio-owned and studio-affiliated movie palaces, which promoted the integration of production, distribution, and exhibition of movies under the studio ownership that escalated throughout the United States, affecting movie distribution in Iowa as it did other states. Movie studios invested lavishly in their distribution businesses to provide exhibitors with improved services, which included posters, access to screening rooms, and pre-examination of prints. Film exchanges grew to have considerable autonomy when they were franchise holders for major studios.

The movie palace became the flagship theater for movie studios. The premier showing of first-run movies in New York or Los Angeles generated national publicity that significantly influenced distribution of movies to communities where local Main Street second- and third-run theaters exhibited the movie six to twelve months later**.**

What became known as vertical integration began in 1910, when three movie studios set up control of production, distribution, and exhibition of the films in studio-owned, first-run theaters throughout the United States. In response to the formation of independent theater ownership groups with centralized management booking of movies, the movie studios followed suit, establishing a distribution system to studio-owned or leased first-run theaters.[179] For example, Triangle Film Corporation integrated its product and distribution with the lease of theaters for exclusive showing of only their films.

In an effort to dominate the movie houses in major cities and, thus to control the new movie industry, the Hollywood studios also formed powerful, regionally-based chains of independently owned movie houses that allowed the studios to control the exhibition of their movies. This commercial integration was not unusual for the time, following a trend set by department stores and grocery chains. The ultimate result was the growth of theater chains as an integral appendage of the movie studio. Soon, as in other states, the studio-owned, or studio-affiliated movie theaters in Iowa exhibited a new release every few days based on advanced reserved tickets, a repeat of the earlier procedure practiced in legitimate live theater performed in large ornate opera houses.

[179] Melnick and Fuchs, 40-43.

Unlike the nickelodeon films exhibited in rented spaces, which purchased film at a cost-per-foot rate, independent movie theater owners rented feature movies. Initially the rental of feature movies at a flat rate was a national practice, affecting all states, including Iowa. A small town theater might pay $15, while a big city theater with a larger population base might pay $150.00. For a feature with a bigger grossing potential, the rental was usually thirty-five to forty percent of the box office receipts; for a blockbuster film, the rental was usually fifty percent of the gross. A small town theater paid on the average of $15 to $200 per film. An individual theater, considered by the movie company as top grosser of the year, received a contract that called for four or more pictures at a fixed rate of thirty-five or forty percent. This changed in the 1940s when MGM started using a sliding scale which started at thirty-five percent of the gross and went higher as the receipts rose. When the gross reached $1,000, theater owners paid fifty percent.[180] Other movie studio distribution companies came up with another variation. They charged higher grossing theaters $1,000 for a first-run movie, and then, if the gross did not reach that level, the distributor could, at its discretion, lower the cost.

During this period, independent entrepreneurs such as Abe Balaban and Sam Katz operated their own chain of theaters and negotiated with the studios for rights to show their films.[181] The Balaban and Katz partnership began in Chicago in 1908, with a single nickelodeon. After building four more theaters, Balaban and Katz's business produced so much revenue that the profits financed their rapid expansion in the surrounding states, including Iowa. To establish their theaters as a distinct brand, Balaban and Katz made their buildings themselves the attraction. The chain differentiated their product through location, design of theater buildings, service, stage shows, and air-conditioning. With the assistance of theater designers George and C. W. Rapp, the chain established a style that helped define the industry and gave them a competitive edge in negotiating with studios. Ultimately they merged their theater empire with the Paramount/Publix studio giant.[182]

Domination of the Studio System

Mergers in the late 1920s, such as the purchase of the Balaban and Katz chain by Paramount Studios, created the core holdings of each major studio's theater chain. When centralization of the movie business wound down during the 1930s, five Hollywood companies controlled the nation's major chains. By owning and operating the most profitable theaters in the United States, Paramount, Lowe's Inc. (precursor

[180] Fridley.
[181] Melnick and Fuchs, 33-34.
[182] Ibid., 41-48.

of the Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer studio), Warner Brothers, Fox (later Twentieth-Century Fox), and Radio-Keith-Orpheum (RKO), dominated the American film industry. Three other minor studios were close behind: Columbia Pictures, Universal Studios, and United Artists. They all produced, distributed, and exhibited films.[183]

To exercise effective control of the industry, the studios needed to control just the 2,000 most important theaters located in higher-income, outlying shopping districts, or in the downtowns of the largest cities.[184] Even though thousands of small town theaters and urban neighborhood movie houses made up the majority of the nation's movie exhibition venues, their significance in terms of revenue was paltry to studio movie distributors.[185] The movie palace theaters owned by the Hollywood studios seated more patrons than all the small theaters in the nation of 500 seats or less. After the first-run in the movie palace studio flagship, a new film took six months to a year to wend its way from movie palace premier and lengthy first-run showing in New York or Los Angeles to an Iowa Main Street first-run theater, and then a second showing in lesser movie houses and rural theaters in the state. With each showing the films became more frayed and scratched along the way.[186]

First-run venues in studio-owned movie palaces also determined the dominant newspaper coverage and subjects of discussion, advertising, publicity, and commercial tie-ins that would benefit the studio as well as the independent theater owner. The studio, in its distribution and exhibition practices, controlled sustained public demand as films flowed from central studio-owned theaters to mom and pop operations in small towns on the periphery of the distribution circuit.[187]

In Iowa, as in other states, the studios also controlled the rules and regulations of distribution outside the studio chain. Independently owned movie theaters had to receive studio clearance and endure the ranking of their theaters in order of importance in generating income, to determine how soon after its release a film became available to a theater, and how long the run at that theater. However, the studio control did not end there. By requiring what was known as block booking, studio companies forced theater owners to rent film in groups rather than individually. Moreover, the additional practice of block and blind booking

[183] Gomery, 55-57; and David Naylor, *Great American Movie Theaters* (Washington D.C.: Preservation Press, 1987), 18. Republic Pictures (founded in 1935) and Monogram held B-picture status, and Disney was a specialized studio for animation.
[184] Gomery, 59.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Putnam, 3.
[187] Ibid., 20.

forced theater chains to make selections without advance knowledge about the film. It was not unusual for the script to be undeveloped at the time the independent theater owner selected films. Thus, the five studios that controlled the vast majority of first-run movie palaces in the largest cities in the United States also dictated where, for how long, and at what price movies could be shown in independently owned theaters throughout the nation.

For over twenty years, independent movie theater chain owners throughout the United States, as well as the federal government, sought to end what was viewed as a monopolistic practice. In 1948, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the major motion picture companies operated an illegal monopoly based on the strategic importance of the theaters owned by studio companies. The court ruled that the control by the movie companies of metropolitan first-run theaters was an exercise of monopoly power on the nation's entire exhibition system.[188] The total of theaters affected by the ruling was around one hundred movie palaces; only five major movie studio companies owned these theaters. This amounted to less than one percent of the nation's theaters. The ruling did not significantly affect studio control over production and distribution, just exhibition. Nevertheless, the court's decision affected and benefitted four-fifths of theaters not owned by these companies that had to negotiate with the studios for the right to exhibit the films.[189]

ASSOCIATED BUSINESSES

Des Moines had a number of associated movie industry businesses. In addition to several regional independent movie exchanges, movie studios delegated the distribution of theatrical advertising materials through regional businesses. What became the National Screen Service (NSS), a company which controlled the distribution of theatrical advertising materials in the United States from approximately 1940 through the 1980s, was an outgrowth of a company formed in 1920 to produce and distribute movie trailers on behalf of movie studios. In the 1930s, Robert Fridley remembers working for a film poster exchange in the Des Moines territory branch office. All of the studio exchange operations at that time had poster departments from which they sold the posters to their first-run theaters, who then, in turn, sold them to regional poster exchanges. The Des Moines poster exchange scoured the surrounding territory buying posters for the first-run theaters. [190]

[188] Ibid., 4-6, 11.
[189] Ibid., 5; and Gomery, 60, 67.
[190] Fridley.

MOVIE THEATER DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE WAR YEARS: 1930 – 1946

DEPRESSION YEARS

The Great Depression brought closed theaters and bankrupt studios. In the previous decade, the proliferation of movie palaces and new purpose-built movie houses forced the closure of smaller theaters, particularly those in outlying areas. In addition, the cost of installing sound equipment to compete with other movie houses exacerbated the impact of the economic downturn on the small, independently owned movie house. These factors, and the high number of downtown movie palaces, slowed movie theater construction at a time when the arrival of sound movies in small community or city neighborhood theaters was just occurring.

Although approximately 110 million people[191] went to movies each week at the onset of the economic depression in 1930, within three years the number dropped to sixty million weekly patrons.[192] In 1932, there were 18,715 theaters in the United States representing a loss of 3,200 since 1930 due to economic failure, consolidation of chain theaters, and cost of conversion to sound during the first years of the depression. In addition to retrofitting theaters or building new ones for sound, the introduction of sound had driven production costs higher: by 1930, the average U.S. feature film cost $375,000 to produce.[193] Of the 18,715 theaters in existence in 1932, 4,589 were thereafter closed; of those, 1,275 were sound theaters. At the same time, only 1,521 silent film houses remained open. By early 1933, only 12,489 theaters still operated; virtually all silent movie houses finally closed.[194]

Concession Sales

The Great Depression prompted theater owners to add concession stands as a way to increase revenue. This change in business operations was significant. Movie theater owners were at this time generally hostile to food in their facilities. (The Grand Theater in Dubuque did not sell even popcorn until 1947 when the owner installed a concession stand in the lobby.) Owners wanted their theaters to present an upscale appearance in distinct contrast to the noisy chewing and the litter of popcorn kernels, candy

[191] Melnick and Fuchs, 71.
[192] Ibid. 72.
[193] Finler, 42.
[194] Ibid.

wrappers and peanut shells typical of burlesque shows and nickelodeons of the past. Traditionally, food was sold by vendors outside of the theater or in adjacent confectionary shops.

Financial necessity led owners of upscale movie theaters to install candy and popcorn dispensers. They offered homemade bonbons, chocolates, and candy apples. Other theater operators leased lobby space to food vendors – holding the line against peanuts, but embracing the profitable popcorn. Theater owners and speculators of the 1930s who erected more modest neighborhood movie houses where the size and placement of the candy counter was an important architectural consideration. As a result, during this time, mass produced candies —Jujubes, Baby Ruths, Raisinets, Milk Duds — appeared under the new glass counters of what became known as the concession stand. [195]

By 1936, ". . . concessions sales totaled $10 million and grew exponentially thereafter."[196] During World War II, candy became scarce because of the sugar rationing and popcorn became more popular than before. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, as movie ticket sales were down, sales of food at concession stands increased.

Innovative Promotions and Presentations

During the depression years, local theaters in Iowa engaged in a number of activities to cut costs and increase their audience. They abandoned prologues and stage shows, eliminating the cost of live talent, stagehands, and musicians. They reduced ticket prices. They instituted multiple showings per day, thereby increasing attendance and concession sales. They cut film rental costs by showing movies over longer periods. To assure repeat visits, local theaters held Dish Nights[197] where they gave away parts of sets of dishes, requiring repeat visits to get an entire set. Also popular were Bank Nights, where lucky recipients received prizes and cash through a lottery process.[198]

They also increased show time (and concession sales) by instituting the double feature, a practice which spread to 1,800 theaters in 1931, and reached sixty percent of the theaters by 1939. As the Great

[195] Jill Hunter Pellettieri, "Make it Large for a Quarter More, A Short History of Movie Theater Concession Stands." *Slate*, http://www.slate.com/id/2169127.html (accessed November 10, 2010).
[196] Melnick and Fuchs, 96.
[197] Madsen.
[198] Melnick and Fuchs, 97-99. The federal government later outlawed these practices in 1935, reinstituting them in the late 1930s.

Depression deepened, the major studios, which initially resisted the double feature, established B movies to provide films for an expanding second-feature market. Block booking remained a standard practice, and movie theater operators were obliged to rent the studio's entire output for a season in order to book the more expensive and polished feature film. One concession to theater owners in these hard times was the fact that B films rented at a flat fee (rather than the box office percentage basis of feature films) and these rates guaranteed the profitability of the B movie. On the other hand, the practice of blind bidding freed the studio from any concern about the quality of the B movies they sold.

Double features, however, were not the rule at first-run theaters. The premieres of feature films at these venues garnered the important initial reviews, publicity and word-of-mouth so important to the launching of an expensive new film. It was only in the second- and third-run movie theater market where the double feature prevailed, even during the depression. [199]

The decline in box office receipts led to a significant decentralization in the movie industry; independent theater chains, not studios, came to dominate movie distribution and exhibition practices. During the early years of the depression, Fox, RKO, and Paramount struggled financially and eventually declared bankruptcy. In response, the other studios (Loews/MGM and Warner Brothers) became very strategic about locating any new theaters near the largest concentrations of patrons. Lowes turned a profit each year.[200]

Despite the depression, after 1935 independent chains and local investors erected new movie theaters equipped to show sound movies. With only a few exceptions, these were Main Street theaters and neighborhood movie houses. By 1937, investors backed new movie theaters in outlying suburban areas and small towns with growing populations. At this time, the transition from opera house to movie house in Iowa was nearing an end. Moving pictures in Iowa, as elsewhere, largely displaced road shows and Chautauquas. Road shows played only in the theaters of major cities.[201]

Typical of the theaters erected during this period in Iowa were the Davenport and the Coronet theaters erected in 1935 in Davenport, which seated 320 and 490 respectively. The Elite movie theater in Laurens, which seated 298, was typical of small town movie houses. The Des Moines neighborhood theater, the

[199] "Roots of the B Movie."
[200] Melnick and Fuchs, 95-96.
[201] *Iowa: A Guide to the Hawkeye State* (New York: Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of Iowa and History House Publisher, Inc, 1949), 150.

Forest, which seated 580, was typical of the small neighborhood and rural movie houses that did not have balconies. The Capri Theatre, another neighborhood movie house in Des Moines, had 700 seats. Owned by the Chicago Dubinsky Brothers' chain, the theater opened in 1935; its location reflected the strategic placement of new theaters near neighborhoods with targeted demographics.

RELATIONSHIP OF POPULATION OF THE STATE'S LARGEST CITIES TO NUMBER OF MOVIE THEATERS, 1938[202]

TOWN	POPULATION	MOVIE THEATERS	LEGITIMATE THEATERS
Ames	10,261	3	
Burlington	26,755	4	4
Cedar Rapids	56,097	6	
Clinton	25,726	2	1
Council Bluff	42,048	3	
Davenport	60,751	8	
Des Moines	142,559	22	3
Dubuque	41,679	6	
Fort Dodge	21,895	5	1 theater/1concert hall
Iowa City	15,340	5	1
Keokuk	15,106	2	
Marshalltown	17, 373	4	
Mason City	23,778	3	
Muscatine	16,778	3	
Ottumwa	28,075	4	
Sioux City	79,183	11	
Waterloo	46,191	6	

THE WAR YEARS: 1941 – 1946

The decade of the 1940s started with a new era of prosperity for movie theaters in the United States. As a matter of public policy during a period of war-time fuel and other shortages, the Roosevelt administration established movie theaters as community centers, allowing them to remain open to promote public morale, provide updated information (and propaganda) to the general public, and as a venue to sell war bonds. (Over 15,000 movie theaters participated in the national campaign to increase sales of war

[202] Compiled from *Iowa: A Guide to the Hawkeye State*.

bonds.)[203] The newsreel feature became an important movie offering at this time. In addition to bringing news from the front to Main Street, the local theater served as a recruitment venue.

The years between 1941 and 1945 had the highest attendance to date. Fueled by the constraints of gas rationing on public mobility and the rise in war-time wages, box office receipts rose from $809 million in 1941 to $1.02 billion in 1943, $1.34 billion in 1944, and ultimately to $1.45 billion in 1945.[204] Candy sales suffered a setback, due to the rationing of sugar; popcorn production, on the other hand, was given the go-ahead by the War Production Board because of its health benefits and popularity. Popcorn flourished, solidifying its hold over the movie concession stand.

Movie theater construction, however, slowed dramatically. In 1942, the War Production Board curtailed theater construction, designated all uninstalled sound and projection equipment for use in military training, and banned civilian use of Freon gas, which was used to cool the theaters.[205] Despite the halt during the war, some new construction began between 1940 and 1941, and continued immediately after the end of the war through the late 1940s. As in the 1930s, the highest percentage of new movie theaters was moderate-sized downtown and neighborhood movie houses. Among those constructed in the early 1940s were the Dodge Theater in Fort Dodge, which seated 436, and the first-run Elkader Theater in the community of Elkader, which seated 400.

IOWA MOVIE THEATERS IN THE POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD AND ERA OF SUBURBANIZATION: 1946 – 1975

POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD AND THE FIFTIES

The post-World War II era through the end of the 1950s was a period of considerable national change. It was a time of economic affluence and consumerism after the Great Depression and World War II that created jobs, wealth, and a cycle of growth. Shaping the popular culture were increased leisure time and travel, middle-class conformity, rock and roll and bebop, fast-food restaurants and drive-in theaters, suburban strip shopping centers and malls, abstract art, modern architecture and the ranch house, the Korean War and the Cold War, baby boomers, bomb shelters, Sputnik, and television.

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[203] Valentine, 128-129; and Melnick and Fuchs, 101.
[204] Melnick and Fuchs, 101.
[205] Ibid., 100.

For the first four decades of the twentieth century, movie going was the dominant form of mass entertainment in the United States. By 1930, weekly cinema attendance was eighty million people, approximately sixty-five percent of the U.S. population.[206] Between 1946 and 1950 movie attendance averaged ninety million per week,[207] constituting between 63 percent (1946) and 60 percent (1950) of the population.[208]

The decade after the end of World War II, however, was the beginning of changes in the public's movie attendance habits. As servicemen returned from the war, middle-class white Americans moved to the suburbs and abandoned many of the residential neighborhoods near the urban nexus of downtown and neighborhood movie theaters. The advent of the G.I. Bill that stimulated purchasing houses as well as new automobiles, affected leisure time expenditures and movie revenues began to decline. The nation turned to radio and, later, to television for diversion. In 1946, there were ninety million weekly moviegoers. In 1949, the number of movie patrons plummeted by twenty million per week and, by 1950, the number dropped another ten million.[209] In 1943, 25.7 percent of recreation expenditures were spent on movies. By 1950, only 12.3 percent of the American family's entertainment dollars were spent at the movies. This figure fell to 4.1 percent by 1963, an eighty-four percent decline in just twenty years.[210]

As theater owners grappled with declining attendance, it became more important to capitalize on snack sales. According to Maggie Valentine's *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, theater owners were successful in establishing concession sales as an important component in their net profits. "From 1948 to 1956, despite a fifty percent decrease in theater attendance, concession sales increased fortyfold. The end of the war meant a return to sugar. Soda flowed freely, and candy counters tempted moviegoers with Goobers,

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[206] Michelle Pautz, "The Decline in Average Weekly Cinema Attendance: 1930-2000," *Issues in Political Economy*, 11 (2002), http://org.elon.edu/ipe/pautz2.pdf. The year 1930 is, according to this source, the earliest year for which accurate and credible movie attendance data exists.

[207] Ibid., citing Thomas W. Bohn and Richard L. Stomgren, *Light and Shadows: A History of Motion Pictures.* Third Edition (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1987).

[208] *Motion Picture Theaters, Except Drive-in: State Industry Market Evaluation, Highbeam Business* http://business.highbeam.com/industry-reports/persona/motion-picture-theaters-except-drive-in (accessed August 25, 2011).

[209] Gomery, 83-88; and Melnick and Fuchs, 115-116.

[210] Melnick and Fuchs, 116.

Sno-Caps, Chuckles, and Black Crows, as well as newer delicacies, such as Junior Mints and M&Ms".[211] By the early 1950s, theater design gave concession stands prime placement in their lobbies.

Impact of Television

Much of the decline in movie attendance after the end of the Korean War was due to television. Between 1947 and 1957, ninety percent of American households acquired a television, and the cartoon shows, live dramas, and nightly news replaced the weekly offerings at the neighborhood movie houses.[212] In 1945, there were fewer than 10,000 television sets in the country; this figure soared to about six million in 1950, and rose to almost 60 million by 1960.[213]

Iowa movie chain owner, Robert Fridley, noted in his biographical account of his years in Iowa's movie industry, that most communities in the state had television in 1950, but that it was not until 1952 when the state's theater owners felt the impact in their box office revenues. In their February 26, 1959 issue, the *Adams County Free Pres*s reported that "the new medium of television had led to the closing of movie theaters in Iowa.[214]

New Technology: TV Verses Cinemascope

Faced with declining attendance, the movie industry attempted to compete with television by introducing new technologies such as *3-D* (three dimension viewing) and wide-screen theaters.[215] In 1952, Paramount Studios introduced *Cinerama,* a wide-screen system that combined a large, interlocking wrap-around screen and cutting edge technology that utilized three cameras to film, three projectors, and four-track stereo sound that created the illusion of being the center of the action. That same year, the studios introduced 3-D movies which utilized polarized cardboard glasses worn by viewers to give the illusion of objects projecting off the screen.

While Cinerama and stereoscopic 3-D did not have a significant impact, the introduction by 20th Century Fox of Cinemascope became a success. Cheaper and more convenient because it used a simple

[211] Pellettieri.
[212] Melnick and Fuchs, 133.
[213] *The World Book Encyclopedia*, 85th ed. s.v. "Television."
[214] "Main Street," *Adams County Free Press*, 26 February 1959. Accessed from Newspaperarchive.com.
[215] Valentine, 165.

anamorphic lens to create a widescreen effect, it debuted in 1953 and remained popular for the following fourteen years. Other similar wide-screen processes entered the big-screen market at this time and included numerous optical techniques that widened the theatrical screen with effects that could not be duplicated on the TV screen: SuperScope (RKO's answer to Fox's Cinemascope), and WarnerScope (Warner's answer to Fox's Cinemascope); MGM's Camera 65, later called Super Panavision-70 and Ultra Panavision-70; Panavision; TechniScope; Todd-AO 70mm (producer Mike Todd's pioneering, independently-owned system); and Super Technarama 70mm (a Todd-AO compatible 70mm film format). All of these wide-screen formats were installed in new or renovated theaters. In existing theaters, often the conversion to wide-screen destroyed the auditorium's original proscenium and organ grills. In others, the new wider screen was simply set up on the stage a little closer to the audience in front of the existing smaller screen.

The *Cedar Rapids Gazette* reported in January 1954 that "Iowa theater owners expect the wide screen, 3D and cinemascope to draw bigger movie crowds this year despite competition from television."[216] The article noted a thirty percent gain over the same time the previous year. Robert Fridley's observation of the impact of television in Iowa beginning in 1952 is substantiated by the drop in movie attendance the following year. Numerous articles published in Cedar Rapids, Corning, and Des Moines note that film companies such as United Artists, Warner Brothers, and Paramount identified television as the cause of the slump in 1953 and were converting their equipment to one of the new processes to compete with television.[217]

Robert Fridley was particularly enamored with the Todd-AO 70mm film. It was twice as wide as the 35mm film that dated to the nickelodeon days and, instead of a single sound track on the film, it had six magnetic tracks providing a wider range of sound. Upon leasing the Uptown Theater in Des Moines, Fridley did what became typical in the upgrading of old theaters projection equipment to new wide-screen use in the 1950s and early 1960s. He also pioneered the wholesale remodeling of the theater building itself. His modernized Capri Theater in Des Moines was typical of Fridley's wholesale approach to modernization.[218] In talking about his work on several theaters in the late 1950s and 1960s, Fridley commented:

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[216] "Iowans Start Going Back to the Movies Again," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 28 January 1954. Accessed from Newspaperarchive.com.

[217] Accessed from Newspaperarchive.com

[218] A review of movie theaters owned by Fridley (using previous survey data; web sites — lostcines.blogspot.com and cinematreasures.org — and his autobiographical manuscript on file with Iowa SHPO) indicates that until

We built a new glass front on the theater, we built a beautiful new canopy, we enlarged the restroom, in the lobby we built a waterfall that ran down rocks behind the new ticket counter. We put a lounge upstairs. In the auditorium, new reclining seats, new side wall lighting, a curved screen curtain, and after tearing out the proscenium, the new screen covered the entire front of the auditorium except for a three foot exit next to the rear sidewalls.[219]

Drive-in Theaters

The wide-spread use of the automobile after the end of World War II stimulated the arrival of the drive-in movie theater. Another factor contributing to the drive-in's growth was the continuing shortage of materials immediately after the end of World War II; drive-in theaters required far fewer materials and capital investment. In 1946, there were 102 drive-in movie theaters in the country; by 1949, there were approximately 1,000. In 1954, the number rose to 3,000. By 1958, drive-in movie theaters accounted for twenty percent of all box office revenues. Their numbers continued to grow and they enjoyed peak popularity in the late 1950s and early 1960s with some 4,000 drive-ins spreading across the United States. Conversely, in approximately the same period (1948 to 1958), over 5,000 indoor theaters closed which reduced their number from 17,000 to 12,000.[220] While older adults preferred to stay home and watch television, the drive-in movie experience appealed especially to families who could take small children and babies to the movies and teenagers who loved the independence and privacy the drive-in provided (hence the drive-in's nickname of "passion pits").

The earliest appearance of drive-in movie theaters in Iowa is believed to be 1947.[221] The drive-in theaters erected in 1948 in Iowa ranged in size from the 180 parking spaces at the 61 Drive-In in Maquoketa to 755 at the Capitol Drive-in in Des Moines (which featured a concession stand and patio, a playground,

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the 1970s, Fridley purchased/operated one or two theaters in a serial manner. The theaters owned by Fridley prior to 1975 constituted less than two percent of the theaters he eventually owned either individually or as part of his chain during his career as a movie theater owner and exhibitor. In the early 1970s, he became involved in the establishment of the first twin theaters in the state and, then went on to "twin" existing theaters in small towns and cities in Iowa. He continued to work in multi-screen ventures in the development of and/or operations of the multiplex through the 1990s. These later efforts often involved renovation of earlier twin, triple, and multi-screen theaters upon acquisition. The stylistic/design changes executed in the 1950s and 1960s were unique to that period. Fridley's subsequent personal choices of theater design in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s reflect not only mainstream decorative treatments of their period of construction/renovation, but also show subjective adaptations by Fridley.

[219] Fridley.

[220] Melnick and Fuchs, 119.

[221] Cinematreasures.org. The Starlight Drive-in in Waterloo opened September 12, 1947.

and first-run Cinemascope features). Other drive-in movie theaters that opened in 1948 were the Bel Air in Davenport, the Cedar Rapids Drive-in, and the Valle Drive-in in Newton. Drive-in owners developed gimmicks designed to boost attendance including playground equipment, small airplane runways (1950s Bel-Air Fly-in Drive-in in Ansgar, Iowa), miniature train rides, and small petting zoos. The Council Bluffs Drive-in employed traveling troupes of singers, dancers, and variety performers who used the roof of the concession stand as a stage before the movie and at intermission. Special price reductions, such as "family night" and "buck night" (a dollar per car), were popular.

Over time, the opportunity to convert drive-in movie theater land into more profitable uses, the limited viewing season and unpredictable weather conditions, along with the advent of color television in the 1960s and VCRs and video rentals in the 1970s, led to a sharp decline in the popularity of drive-ins. By the mid-1970s, few new drive-ins appeared in Iowa. Existing documentation shows that two drive-in theaters remain open: the 61 Drive-in Theatre in Maquoketa and the Valle Drive-in in Newton.

ABANDONED AND DEMOLISHED DRIVE-IN THEATERS IN IOWA[222]

Starlite Drive-in, Algona
Atlantic Drive-in, Atlantic
Carroll Drive-in, Carroll
Twin Drive-in, Cedar Rapids
Corral Drive-in, Cherokee
Coralville Drive-in, Coralville
Decorah Drive-in, Decorah
Plantation Drive-in, Des Moines
Dubuque Drive-in, Dubuque
Fairfield Drive-in, Fairfield
Harlan Drive-in, Harlan
Drive-in, Oskaloosa
HiVue Drive-in, Knoxville
Marshalltown Drive-in, Marshalltown
Highway 18 West, Mason City
Hilltop Drive-in, Muscatine
Corral Drive-in, Perry
Iowa Drive-in, Shenandoah
75 Drive-in, Sioux City
Spirit Lake Drive-in, Spirit Lake
Waco Drive-in, Washington
New Starlite Drive-in, Altoona
Boone Drive-in, Boone
Hillcrest Drive-in, Cedar Falls
Town and Country Drive-in, Centerville
Clarinda Drive-in, Clarinda
Bel Air Drive-in, Davenport
Capitol Drive-in, Des Moines
S.E. 14th St. Drive-in, Des Moines
Super 20 Drive-in, Dubuque
Fort Dodge Drive-in, Fort Dodge
Wigwam Drive-in, Hawarden
Falls Drive-in, Iowa Falls
Mars Under Stars Drive-in, Le Mars
Lakeland Drive-in, Milford
Drive-in, Oelwein
Red Oak Drive-in, Red Oak
Capri Drive-in, Sioux City
Smithland Drive-in, Smithland
Bel Air Drive-in, Ansgar
Skyvue Drive-in, Waterloo
Waverly Drive-in, Waverly
Ranch Drive-in, Ames
Burlington Drive-in, Burlington
New Collins Road Drive-in, Cedar Rapids
218 Drive-in, Charles City
Drive-in, Clinton
Oasis Drive-in, Davenport
Pioneer Drive-in, Des Moines
Westvue Drive-in, Des Moines
Chief Drive-in, Estherville
Grinnell Drive-in, Grinnell
Hwy 2 and 65 Drive-in, Humeston
Skylark Drive-in, Keokuk
Twixt Town Drive-in, Marion
Ridge Drive-in, Mt. Pleasant
South Drive-in, Ottumwa
Triangle Drive-in, Rockwell City
Gordon Twin Drive-in, Sioux City
Corral Outdoor, Spencer
Corral Outdoor Theatre, Storm Lake
Starlite Drive-in, Waterloo

[222] Compiled from cinematreasures.org.

Multiplex Theaters

The small town or neighborhood theater of the 1940s and 1950s, just as in previous decades, recalls a time when a dime, later a quarter and, then, thirty-five cents bought two features, a newsreel, a comedy short, a travelogue, a cartoon, a preview of coming attractions and the main feature. These movie houses were part of the unique experience provided by movie theaters that were predominantly in the central business district of a small town or rural county seat, or in city neighborhood and commercial enclaves along electric street car and bus lines. Most featured second-run movies or companion features that seldom exhibited a first-run movie. The relocation of the movie theatre to the mall marked an important transition period for neighborhood and small town theaters.

In 1957, Canada's Elgin Theater in Ottawa became the first movie theater venue to offer two film programs exhibited simultaneously on different screens. In the United States, Stanley Durwood[223] receives credit for pioneering the multiplex. Durwood came to the realization that he could operate several attached auditoria connected to a common projection room with the same staff through careful management of the start times for each movie. On July 12, 1963, Durwood opened, in the Ward Parkway Shopping Center of Kansas City, Missouri, what is widely believed to be the first movie theater designed specifically as a twin multiplex.[224] He subsequently opened a fourplex in 1966 and a sixplex in 1969.

The multiplex created greater flexibility in scheduling; a popular film could be shown on multiple screens at the same multiplex, which reduced the choice of other films but offered more choice of viewing times or a greater number of seats to accommodate patrons. Depending on demand of certain days and hours, the theater operator could easily switch an auditorium to another film. Such operations featured a new floor plan to accommodate centrally located and larger projection rooms and expanded concession counters as part of an open lobby concept that incorporated the box office counter and ticket takers as well as entrances to restrooms and smaller theaters all on one floor. Among the commercial benefits of consolidation of an independent owner's theaters at one location, was one payroll, and property taxes, insurance, and utilities covering one site's operation.[225]

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[223] Durwood was at that time chief executive of Durwood Theaters, later American Multi-Cinema and then AMC Entertainment. He is the nephew of Maurice and Barney Dubinsky who founded the Chicago-based Dubinsky movie chain that owned theaters in Iowa as well as other midwestern states through the 1990s.

[224] Kansas City architect, William Borland Fullerton, AIA, designed the theater.

[225] Fridley.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, twin-screen theaters became increasingly popular, resulting in the retrofitting of existing movie houses to contain a shared single foyer area with multiple auditoria. In the 1970s, many large 1920s movie palaces became multiple screen venues by dividing auditorium and, sometimes, stage and balcony spaces into small theaters. In Iowa, owners of older movie houses converted or divided existing auditoria or "annexed" adjacent commercial space, to create multiple screening rooms. Among those altered at this time was the Capitol Theater in Newton, the Clinton (rechristened the Capri III after the addition of a third screen) in Clinton, and the 1941 Clarion Theater in Clarion.

The Dubinsky Brothers' chain developed a new two-screen theater located in the Eastgate Shopping Center in Des Moines which opened in 1966 as "Iowa's only Twin Theatre."[226] About the same time, Robert Fridley designed the River Hills and Riviera twin-screen movie theater,[227] installing a Cinerama screen in the River Hills Theater. By the early 1970s, new twin- and three-screen theaters became increasingly common in the state, such as the two-screen College Square Theater in Cedar Falls. In 1972, Fridley developed the Sierra 3, a three-screen theater in a new shopping center on the western edge of West Des Moines. By the mid-1970s, a new boom era of self-standing movie theater multiplex construction was well underway with ever increasing numbers of screening rooms.[228]

The Rise of Independent Regional Movie Chains: 1948 – 1975

After losing the antitrust suit in 1948, the major movie studios[229] began selling their theater chains. This provided new opportunities and competition in the movie exhibition business. Competitive rates now dictated the distribution of individual films rather than blocks of films. One result was that the major studios began producing fewer films per year for higher fees.[230] The victory of the theater owners was short-lived; attendance at movie theaters declined sharply throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

According to Robert Fridley, at this time the Iowa theater owners and chains negotiated with studios through agent representatives to book individual movies for a predetermined length of the run. If a theater or chain owner wanted the first run of a film in the state, exclusive exhibition rights during a

[226] Later, the owners added a third theater and changed the name to "Eastgate Cinemas III."
[227] Fridley created a separate name for each auditorium because one contained a Cinemascope screen.
[228] Melnick and Fuchs, 101.
[229] Paramount, Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer, Warner Brothers, Fox/Twentieth-Century Fox, Radio-Keith-Orpheum, Columbia Pictures, Universal Studios, and United Artists.
[230] Valentine, 164.

certain time period or other special considerations, he/she often traveled to New York or Hollywood or to regional offices in cities like Omaha, Nebraska. The more movie theaters owned by a chain, the better the chance of a successful negotiation with the movie studio.

The history of independent theater chains and movie owners in Iowa is complex and reflects the evolution of wholesale movie rental practices. Among the identified theater owner chains operating in Iowa from 1920 through 1975 were: A. H. Blank Theaters, Affiliated Theaters, Associated Theaters, Balaban and Katz, Big Time Cinema, Central State Theaters, Commonwealth Theaters, Dickinson Theaters, Dubinsky Brothers, Finkelstein Theaters, Fridley Theaters, Independent Theaters, Iowa United Theaters, March Brothers/March Theaters, Mort Singer Theater Corp., and Pioneer Theaters. The largest chains in the post-war period were Independent Theaters, Fridley Theaters and Central State Theaters. Studio chain theaters operating in Iowa in this period included: Fox Theaters (Twentieth Century Fox), Orpheum/RKO Theaters, and Paramount-Publix Theaters.

The Movie Theater Boom of the 1970s

Beginning in the 1970s, movie theaters in Iowa enjoyed a renaissance; a building boom reminiscent of that of that of the 1920s materialized. The movie industry had changed. The old distribution system dominated by the major studios that determined what theater received first-run movies was obsolete. The consequent divestiture by the studios of movie theater properties created a diverse group of independent theaters and chains which procured movies directly from a variety of studios. To compete with other studios for movie sales, the studios purchased time on television to advertise their movies nationally. Multiplex theater concessions generated a significant profit. Moreover, design and projection innovations related to multi-screen theaters that allowed more control in the scheduling and flexibility in exhibition, stimulated more showings to accommodate a growing audience that created a demand for all types of movies. As a result, the early twentieth century studio controlled hierarchy of first- and second-run movies and studio-owned movie theaters no longer existed. There was more profit for studios in selling directly to a growing network of independently owned movie venues. As a result, independently owned multi-screen theaters in malls and in self-standing entertainment centers received the same movie prints shipped by the studios to thousands of theaters throughout the country at the same time. Now each theater could be a first-run venue and all received distribution in a fairly equitable manner.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, owners of movie theater chains, such as Robert Fridley, purchased old theaters in Iowa’s small and large communities in areas where growth or existing demand made them

marginally financially feasible, renovating them to the perceptions and taste of the owner and/or the franchise architecture practiced by theater designers and architects.[231]

By this time, most small town and urban neighborhood theaters dating to the early twentieth century did not survive. Those single screen movie houses that were not divided into two-screen venues in the late sixties and early seventies sat idle due to lack of development capital available for properties in older neighborhoods. By the mid-1970s, it was apparent that the movie theater's historical visual and cultural connection to its patrons' neighborhood and community was over.

EVOLUTION OF MOVIE THEATER DESIGN IN IOWA: 1900 – 1975

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY COMMERCIAL MOVIE THEATER DESIGN

All movie theaters have common component spaces and features. At a minimum, they include a façade with architectural styling that includes double or multiple doors for ingress and egress, access to a ticket booth, windows or glass-fronted cases for the display of posters, an open or recessed exterior vestibule, the box office, the marquee, electric light display, interior and exterior architectural design treatments, an auditorium, a movie screen/stage and a projection booth.[232] They include additional accoutrements and extra interior spaces as well.

Economics dictated the typical American theater plan at the beginning of the twentieth century. Basic to finding an investor to erect for sale or lease a building that could house a movie theater, a movie theater business plan had to yield profits commensurate with other adjacent or nearby commercial uses. Location was of strategic importance; a site within an active commercial setting with sufficient density was a given. A successful movie theater required a good location with sufficient foot traffic to supply the necessary attendance to cover overhead expenses and generate profits. As a result, the self-standing, purpose-built movie theater usually located on or near a busy commercial thoroughfare, on a small lot that generated the least taxes. The savings in taxes was important in an industry with a narrow margin of profitability due to the cost of movies purchased or rented in sufficient volume to stimulate movie

[231] Earlier in the mid-twentieth century, Fridley sequentially owned and/or managed a small number of small town and neighborhood movie theaters. However, it was not until the late twentieth century that he owned a substantial number to constitute a chain.

[232] Early commercial movie theaters converted from other commercial or private property types may lack some of these characteristics, but, at a minimum they have a reception area for the ticket booth and an auditorium, movie screen and projection area and a rear or side emergency exit.

attendance twice a week by the average theater patron.[233] At the same time, most of these theaters required certain levels of extravagance on nonfunctional features, such as the façade design and interior and exterior ornamentation that were part of the entire viewing experience (i.e., the width of the building and square footage of exterior ornamentation was a cost issue). One problem was that the savings in the cost of a small lot and its reduced tax basis resulted in reducing the stage space to a minimum at the expense of the size and number of scenery sets stored by theaters that combined live entertainment with movie presentations. The effective design required the minimum use of labor, as well. All efforts to create a profit margin focused on getting the maximum number of seats and a minimum stage size on the smallest piece of real estate that would accommodate a theater facility.[234]

At the same time, the owner of the theater wanted to be competitive with other movie facilities in bargaining with studios for films. Owners needed adequate facilities for preparing a show, good conditions for the performance (whether movie or ancillary live act), and space and technical accoutrements to produce a good show at a low cost. The audience wanted the maximum of comfort, a minimum of distractions, and complete safety.[235]

Health and Safety Regulations

Fire was the greatest threat in theaters. Yet, according to the current Iowa Fire Marshal, the state legislature did not enact a comprehensive uniform state building code with mandated fire safety provisions for theaters until the 1970s. A review of state law reveals that as early as 1902, the Iowa legislature passed laws relating to the construction of fire escapes. Moreover a number of laws addressed safety in the workplace.[236] In the nineteenth century, fear of fire in buildings of public assembly led to the practice of brick buildings. However, for the most part, regulation of theaters in Iowa occurred on the local level.

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[233] In the nickelodeon era, the overhead was the actual cost of purchasing sufficient reels of film to run throughout the day and introduce new films on a daily to weekly basis. After World War I, studios rented movies at flat rates and also controlled distribution locations subjecting independent (non-studio) theater owners to monopolistic practices that reduced competition and increased costs.

[234] Lee Simonson, "Theater Planning," *Architecture of the New Theater (*New York: Theater Arts, Inc. 1935), 18-19.

[235] Harold Burris Meyer and Edward C. Cole, *Theaters and Auditoria* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1964), 1.

[236] *Acts and Resolutions Passed at the Regular Session of the Twenty-ninth General Assembly of the State of Iowa* (Des Moines: Bernard Murphy, State Printer, 1902), 108.

After the Iroquois Theater fire in Chicago in 1903, in which hundreds of people lost their lives, municipalities throughout the United States initiated fire codes. The Iroquois fire prompted the requirement that exit doors open outward and have a panic bar, required a fireproof asbestos curtain to be raised and lowered before and after each performance to assure separation of the audience from the stage, and limited the maximum number of seats between aisles to six or eight to assure rapid evacuation. Two years after the Iroquois Theatre fire, Chicago led the nation in establishing building codes that set standards for all buildings of public assembly. Building codes passed before the start of World War I required that movie theaters occupy ground-floor spaces. This made second-floor Opera Halls, such as those common in towns throughout Iowa, unsuitable for movie shows (and hastened their obsolescence).
By 1927, building codes for movie theaters were fairly uniform throughout the country. Among other requirements in the standard set of codes was the construction of a fireproof enclosure to house the potentially explosive nitrate film and projector.[237] Other requirements of the codes that became basic elements of theater design included the number and placement of exits, the inflammability of building and ornamental materials, the provision of easy access from the theater to the street, and built-in firefighting equipment.[238] The initial use of these new building codes in the conversion of small opera house auditoria to specialized facilities for showing movies improved both safety conditions and public image of the movies.

Technological Innovations

By the second decade of the twentieth century, technological advances in construction technology changed theater architecture, and included the use of structural steel and reinforced concrete, the improved cantilever, the widespread use of the electric passenger elevator, the introduction of the electric light, and the production of flameproof materials. These improvements made the buildings safer and more adaptable.[239]

The first major technological change in the history of film occurred in the 1920s with the introduction of mechanical sound, which began a continual process of innovation. By the end of 1930, the industry successfully converted to movies with sound.[240]

[237] Gomery, 18-19.
[238] Henderson, 492.
[239] Ibid., 490.
[240] Gomery, 18-22.

Other indirect technological innovations also affected movie house design. Abe Balaban and Sam Katz became the first theater owners to offer "air-cooled" comfort by adapting refrigeration technology developed for Chicago's packing houses.[241] By 1925, air conditioned theaters were the talk of the industry; but only the large movie palaces could afford such installations. Air conditioning became more available in the 1930s when Willis Carrier produced a compact, less expensive system.

In Iowa, news articles at the opening of the Capitol Theater in Burlington in the late 1930s paid considerable attention to describing the Westinghouse air conditioning system that moved 25,000 cubic feet of air per minute and dehumidified in the summer and humidified the air in winter.[242] The theater was one of the first to use air conditioning in the state. Up until the mid-1950s, movie theaters were one of the few public places where middle- and working-class citizens could enjoy a cool environment for an extended period a time. After World War II, nearly seventy-five percent of movie theaters had air conditioning.[243]

The Evolution of Movie Theater Architecture Property Types in Iowa: 1910 – 1930

The outfitting of a modest conversion movie theater required the skills of carpenter and painter. The more elaborate purpose-built movie theater building required the professional services of architects, contractors, electricians as well as the assistance of special theater decorators and designers.[244]

Beginning around 1910, the use of distinctive façades for small-to-moderate-sized movie theaters continued the nineteenth century practice of legitimate theaters. Many of the buildings that housed these theaters (like opera houses) included retail and office space, with the presence of a movie theater becoming much more prominent. Whether modest or pretentious, the primary façade of the movie house was the most important feature. The earliest conversion theaters' renovations included the removal or covering of the entire old building front and installation of a new façade. Whether renovated or new construction, early movie theater facades included an open arcade in which the ticket booth and easel frames to hold movie posters advertising the films being shown and coming attractions were located. Another, more permanent variation was an enclosed lobby with a ticket booth built facing the sidewalk or

[241] John Margolies and Emily Gwathmey, *Ticket to Paradise: American Movie Theaters and How We Had Fun* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), 18.
[242] Capitol Theater Foundation of Burlington Iowa, "Capitol Theater of Burlington Iowa: History of the Capitol Theater" http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=126798167351493 (Accessed 16 June 2010).
[243] Gomery, 76.
[244] Hodges, 22.

incorporated in a side entrance. The theater's front also included electric lights spelling out the name of the theater or denoting the building as a motion picture theater. Often small incandescent lamps with low candle power studded the interior of the arcade.[245]

The film projection booth was initially installed inside the building and above the ticket window or according to other specifications that met fire codes. Sometimes the booth partly projected outside through the exterior load bearing wall. Early movie theaters usually had duplicate projectors to avoid overheating and as a back-up. Fire insurance underwriters initially approved both metal, or metal lined and asbestos covered wood projection booths.[246]

The interior of the moving picture theater required a large space with a high ceiling and a plan that complied to building and fire codes in regard to exits, seating capacity, construction materials, and other factors. The design usually included a slanting floor (one foot in every eight to ten feet). Chairs with folding bottoms were often special ordered to conform to the slope of the floor. In the latter case, each row of chairs sat on a level section of the floor. The size of the screen located at the rear of the hall conformed to the size of the projected picture, which was determined by the style of lenses and distance between the projector and the screen.[247]

In the first half of the twentieth century, most movie theaters included a stage, built at least three feet higher than the floor and the proscenium arch designed to conform to the height and width of the hall with a margin of at least one foot at the top and three feet at the side. The ideal stage was at least ten to twelve feet deep.[248] The interior lighting provided the capacity to be sufficiently well lighted to discourage disturbances and, at the same time, to create an atmosphere conducive to the enjoyment by the movie patron. Depending on the language of fire codes, at each exit was a red light or a red sign reading "Exit." Incandescent light wall sconces that remained on during the picture had shades that prevented the light from shining directly into the patrons' eyes. [249]

It was during the early years of the twentieth century, that the purpose-built movie theater became a separate architectural property type distinguished from a traditional live-performance theater or the

[245] Ibid., 22-24.
[246] Ibid., 25-26.
[247] Ibid., 21-22, 25.
[248] Ibid., 23
[249] Ibid., 24.

conversion theater renovated from existing commercial space.[250] This change coincided with the widespread production of feature-length films which began just before World War I. Design of these theaters focused more heavily on the individual comfort of an audience that sat through the prelude acts, twenty-minute movie shorts and a feature film. Of particular importance was the need for an unobstructed view.[251]

By the 1920s, the typical design of the movie house that showed feature films incorporated a wide lobby entered from (or directly under) a large, lighted marquee. Integral to or augmenting the marquee was the common use of an elaborated vertical "blade" sign. This signage differed markedly from the building itself, and clearly distinguished the movie theater from neighboring commercial buildings.[252]

Another modification to the traditional commercial façade occurred when the upper zone of the elevation included ornamentation on a wall with only a few or no windows. By the late 1920s, the Art Deco style utilized the traditional upper floor treatment, but on a bolder scale using abstract patterns that often extended up from the ground floor and across the upper wall surface. The streamlined Art Moderne style, as used in the design of 1930s and 1940s theaters, like the more exuberant 1930s Art Deco style treatments, tended to make even modest buildings stand out as prominent individual facilities instead of just occupying one or two units in a group of storefronts.[253]

Of note in Iowa of this early practice are the designs of movie palaces by the Chicago firm of Rapp and Rapp which featured a center bay section incorporating ". . . the entrance at street level and a large ornamental wall/window surface above and a marquee treated as an integral part of the unit in between."[254] Two distinguishing examples of this treatment are the Iowa Theater in Cedar Rapids and the Orpheum Opera House[255] in Dubuque. Both utilize the large central wall/window surface extending upward the full height of the building above the marquee.

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[250] Although live performances continued to be performed.
[251] Valentine, 3-5.
[252] Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture, Updated Edition* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2000), 65.
[253] Ibid., 65.
[254] Ibid., 75.
[255] Later retrofitted as a movie palace.

One- and Two-part Commercial Block Theaters

From the late nineteenth century well into the first half of the twentieth century, the one-part and the two-part commercial block building dominated commercial centers in large and small communities throughout Iowa and the Main Streets of America. These buildings might or might not be designed by an architect. Architectural embellishments might include terra cotta or cast stone elements that reflect one or more of the styles popular at the time of construction. This functional building form featured masonry construction utilizing brick or stone. One or more commercial storefronts occupied the ground-floor level. In the two-part commercial block building, businesses, offices of professionals, meeting rooms and/or residences occupied the upper floors. Of note is the frequent practice of incorporation of apartments for the owner or manager on the second floor. This practice occurred both in cities and rural areas and in both large and small movie theaters. These apartments often incorporated a view of the auditorium as well as providing access to the adjacent projection room.

The two-part commercial block building adapted easily to the early twentieth century conversion of commercial space into nickelodeons, vaudeville theaters that showed movies, and purpose-built movie houses. The first purpose-built movie theaters erected in Iowa's commercial districts borrowed heavily from the massing, form, and architectural styling of their neighboring commercial blocks. As a result, the first-story commercial space became the dominant part of the building, while the upper part offered a wall for ornamentation and signage. The very modest one-part commercial block movie theater was very rare and occurred most frequently in rural towns. The Lyric Theater in Belmond is an excellent rare example of the early one-part commercial block movie theater building.

To attract patrons, pre-World War II theaters incorporated a wide variety of design motifs, ranging from Late 19th and Early Twentieth Century Revivals to Art Deco and Art Moderne treatments,[256] as is documented in various Iowa movie theater survey efforts. The large, lighted vertical marquee and/or horizontal canopy distinguished the movie theater from other commercial buildings. Movie theater designs of this period also utilized Late Victorian commercial and tapestry brick designs, as well as framed wall and vault building designs. In the latter two of these designs in particular, the widened main façade featured a recessed open air vestibule or arcade leading into the lobby. [257]

[256] Longstreth, 51.
[257] Ibid., 75, 110.

Examples of a variety of Iowa movie theater buildings adapted from an existing two-part commercial block buildings or erected as new two-part commercial blocks include the King Theater in Belle Plaine, the Iowa Theater in Bloomfield, the Oyster Regent Theater in Cedar Rapids (a.k.a. Cotton or Regent), the Majestic Theater in Centerville, the Lake Theater in Clear Lake, and the American Theater in Corning.

Movie Palaces

As noted previously, the movie palace was a unique and extreme architectural genre. This movie theater property type first appeared concurrent with the advent of the feature movie, a departure from the nickelodeon and Main Street Movie House architecture. It is important to note that the major factor influencing the design of the movie palace was wholly economic — to attract large crowds to first-run movies as part of a larger entertainment experience. To achieve this purpose, architects designed fanciful and/or dramatic exterior façades that stood out from the surrounding commercial landscape. These movie theaters were large, usually seating at least 1,000 patrons, and featured large stages to accommodate live acts, often with animals as well as exhibition of movies. They were the first to have the latest in technological advances – air conditioning, wide screens, and stereophonic sound.

Prior to the onset of the Great Depression, the large and opulent movie palace strongly reflected the design of the opera houses and music halls built in Europe and the United States during the late nineteenth century. All were architect-designed and their architecture created illusion and a sense of affluence. The movie palace interior of this era featured deep pile carpeting, carved and gilded plaster moldings, walls and ceilings with painted designs, elaborate lighting, and ornate proscenium arches. A series of reception rooms — vestibules, lobbies, and passage ways — led to grand staircases with landings that accessed different balcony levels. The auditorium featured a series of seating sections from the stalls or orchestra seats near the stage to the *parquet* or dress circle section on the main floor; to the loge, with its wide aisles and wider seats located under the balcony; and finally, to balcony boxes and the open balcony seating sections.[258]

As patrons moved inside, they saw multi-level auditoria and grand staircases. Initially, all of the surfaces featured heavy ornamentation, often along an architectural theme. Because movie palaces were typically designed with a stage for live performances, they also held dressing rooms, asbestos curtains at the

[258] The size and sequence of interior spaces is one of a number of features that distinguish the Movie Palace from the smaller commercial block theater, or the Main Street rural movie house. Like Movie Palaces, these smaller theaters often featured elaborate architectural exteriors and interiors.

proscenium, and all the necessary rigging and lighting. An organ sat in the orchestra pit and ornamental side walls camouflaged the pipes. In addition to the requisite foyer, lobby, and auditorium, movie palaces often featured accessory spaces such as lounges, smoking rooms, cry rooms, and play rooms.[259]

The Atmospheric Theater

A sub-type on the movie palace was the atmospheric theater. Developed by architect John Eberson in 1923, the atmospheric theater created the environment of an exotic, romantic outdoor locale. The ornament of the auditorium walls included windows, rooftops, doors, balconies, masonry walls, plantings and other treatments to suggest a European village, a Spanish courtyard at dusk, a Turkish marketplace, or an exotic island. The dark blue ceiling incorporated hundreds of pinpoint lights that simulated stars. Projectors placed high on the theater walls created moving clouds, sunsets, lightning, and other effects across the ceiling.[260] The wide variety of atmospheric theaters included exotic Egyptian and Aztec architectural themes. Although Eberson developed the concept, other architects made the atmospheric theaters their *forte*, including Thomas Lamb of New York and the Rapp brothers in Chicago.

The 2,000 seat Paramount Theater in Waterloo was an atmospheric movie palace designed by Armin Frank and Urban F. Peacock of the firm of Peacock and Frank in 1927. [261] Visitors entered the theater's front doors and passed through a set of columns into a circular lobby with lighted alcoves that stood just below a domed ceiling. Straight ahead was the grand staircase to a second floor foyer that led to the balcony seating area. Artificial trees stood on both sides of auditorium balcony. An effects machine projected stars on the theater's ceiling and, once each night, the moon rose and set.[262]

Modern Movement Movie Palaces

As the sobering realities of the Great Depression set in, the highly ornamental Revival styles seemed extravagantly fussy. The Art Deco movie palace, erected in the 1930s in Iowa, featured dramatic polychrome exteriors of geometric forms and vertical massing created by vertical planes spaced at regular intervals that extended the full height of the façade. Ornamentation included striated and abstract details that embellished wall surfaces. These designs reflect the American Modern Movement style that evolved

[259] Naylor, 20-22.
[260] Ibid., 23; and Joseph M. Valerio, Daniel Friedman, and Nancy Morison Ambler. *Movie Palaces: Renaissance and Reuse* (New York: Educational Facilities Laboratories Division, Academy for Educational Development, 1982), 33.
[261] Urban F. Peacock's partnership with Armin Frank ended in 1928. Their work included a string of quality medium scale theaters in several states, among them being the Paramount theaters in Waterloo and Cedar Rapids.
[262] Cinematreasures.org

out of the plain, cubist European International Style prior to World War II. The Art Deco style movie palace employed large expanses of colored glass panels, and chrome and stainless steel trim. Unlike earlier movie palaces, the Art Deco style theater did not present theatrical acts and confined live performances to restrained variety acts. The orchestra pit disappeared in some of these theaters, as they were all wired for sound. The hierarchy of spaces continued as part of the plan, but everything was streamlined, and size of auditoria was smaller than their 1920s counterparts.

Design Treatments: Town and City

Even many small towns and urban neighborhoods in Iowa could boast of a high-style movie house, often designed by the same architects who built big-city movie palaces. As has been noted in this discussion, small Iowa towns had theaters representing a cusp between the large Main Street or neighborhood movie theater and the movie palace as well as more vernacular versions of Two-part Commercial Block movie houses. Vaudeville theaters converted into movie theaters also had versions that almost rivaled the smaller movie palaces.[263] The variety of treatments found in Iowa is significant.

The architectural styling of the early pre-World War I, twentieth century Wonderland Theater in Paullina originally referenced the Colonial Revival Style. The symmetrical façade had a framed entrance featuring a keystone arch supported by wide, square piers. This entrance led into a recessed vestibule with plaster stenciled walls and a ticket booth. Flanking this central space were single doors on the first floor and small, double-hung, multi-light sash windows on the upper two stories. Each of the windows and doors had a square, terracotta window hood of classical design. Centered on the third floor of the façade was a pair of small, single-pane casement windows (which appeared to house the projection room). Brick corbelling formed a cornice. White glazed brick was used sparingly at the top and bottom of the side wall pilasters and as a single row below the corbel cornice. An early photograph shows movie posters placed on ornate tri-pods in the recessed vestibule. A large sign attached to the side of the central entrance appeared to be papered with playbills. Photographic documentation shows alterations to the façade after 1941, which included boarding over of the first two stories and creation of ticket booth doors and display cases.

An excellent extant example of the generic, early twentieth century, small town theater is the Albia Theater. The movie house references no particular style but has a symmetrical design that features a

[263] Naylor, 17, 32.

center projecting marquee above a box office flanked by theater poster cases and doors. A string of small horizontal, single-pane windows, the height of the marquee, occurs on the mezzanine level adjacent to the marquee. Above, on the second story, are three sets of four-unit ribbon windows with double-hung sashes. The only ornamentation is the deep stone parapet cap with ball finials at each corner and flanking the middle bay of the primary façade.

The 1926 renovated Mission Revival style Ritz Theater[264] in Centerville today continues to feature the same three-story façade with a symmetrical arrangement of smooth walls flanking a rectangular recessed balcony with a projecting tiled shed roof supported by large brackets. The smooth flanking walls terminate in curved parapets that give the appearance of towers. Below the recessed balcony is a flat mounted panel sign with the word "Ritz" in the central panel. Below this is a recessed rectangle that stretches the width of the façade that features a central arched balcony flanked by arched windows with cloth awnings. Below these openings and spreading across the façade are rectangular window openings, which once had cloth awnings, that flank another sign advertising the current bill of fare. A suspended rectangular metal awning projects from beneath these windows. An arcade that incorporated a ticket booth, doors, and poster frames filled the ground floor of the façade. The most recent photographs on-line show the arched openings covered by panels painted to show window and door openings that correspond with the location of the bays on the ground level façade of the building. The interior decoration of the 1926 renovation referenced Renaissance Revival and Neoclassical styles, featuring gilded plasterwork and a painted sky on the auditorium ceiling, a small orchestra pit, a stage, proscenium, and balcony.[265]

Movie Theater Design 1930 to 1950

Theaters built after 1935 moved away from ornate designs, including use of antique furniture, tapestries and historic chandeliers, and began to fade in popularity nationally.[266] Movie theaters at this time began to reflect the design tenets of the Modern Movement style which began prior to the Great Depression. New designs such as Art Deco, beginning in the late 1920s and ending in the late 1930s, and Art Moderne, which began to appear in Main Street America in the 1930s and continued to the U.S. entry into

[264] Opened in the early 1900s as the Majestic Theatre in a late nineteenth century building originally housing a newspaper's offices, the theater later was renamed the Orpheum. After a remodeling in 1926, it was renamed the Ritz.

[265] Interior rehabilitation work is underway.

[266] Melnick and Fuchs, 98.

World War II, predominated. These theaters featured expansive marquees that worked in tandem with the exterior design treatment. The stylistic features also appeared as coordinated interiors.

The Modern Movement style impacted the design of the movie palace as well as architecture of the smaller neighborhood theaters, especially in interior design. The change to more streamlined interiors met economic parameters of the era. The comfort of the patron could be improved for far less than would be the cost of the opulent interior design and furnishing in the 1920s. The change to simpler, less costly design treatments, in turn, coincided with the costly renovation of many movie theaters to install sound equipment. The 1930s and 1940s, thus became an important era for renovation of movie theaters throughout the United States, a practice that resumed in the post-World War II years.

By the early 1930s, theater design, just like other commercial building design, also began responding to the impact of the automobile. Changes ranged from the shape and size of the marquee to parking lot accommodations. The marquee extended further from the theater façade so that the building stood out from all other buildings on the street. Prior to this time and up to the 1920s, the front wall of a movie theater was dark, flat, and detailed. In the 1930s, bright (often moving) lights boldly outlined and accentuated the building form.[267]

The Castle Theatre in Manchester is typical of the first-run theaters found in prosperous communities in Iowa at this time. Designed by the Des Moines firm of Wetherell and Harrison, the Castle is typical of the small town theater erected in the 1930s. The design features a crenellated parapet and a small marquee with the theater name in neon. There was no vertical blade sign.

More dramatic examples of the Wetherell and Harrison firm's work were the design of the Capitol Theater in Burlington and the Charles Theater in Charles City. Despite their smaller size relative to the Revival style movie palaces in the state, both are outstanding examples of the dramatic, soaring, dynamic Art Deco movie palace façade which clearly distinguish the buildings from their commercial block streetscape. Each features polychrome vertical shafts flanking a central bay of vertical planes. Both use square glass tiles for wall cladding.

The Charles grabs attention with its alternating and interspersed vertical stripes of rust-red, cream, dark blue, and light blue. Its facade has a fan-like appearance because of the use of recessed and protruding

[267] Valentine, 97.

geometrical vertical planes executed in terra cotta and structural glass in shades of burgundy, brown, and vanilla. It was among the first in the Midwest to be built specifically for sound pictures. The lobby featured a rich terrazzo floor, wood veneer walls trimmed with stainless steel and a ceiling of deep colors achieved through paint and modern color lighting. A two-toned carpet graced a foyer with painted and glazed walls and ceiling. Acoustical tile decorated the side walls and ceiling of the auditorium.

Between 1936 and 1939, the Wetherell and Harrison firm designed eight such Art Deco theaters for the Central States Theater Corporation movie chain. Of these, only the Charles Theater and the Capitol Theater retain a high degree of architectural integrity.

An example of the more restrained Modern *Movement* style Art Moderne movie theater is the circa 1930 Rose Theater in Audubon. The small, story-and-a-half theater features a projecting marquee incorporating an integrated, lighted, multi-color blade sign with no lettering. The square glass panels clad the walls, flanking glass block windows over the marquee, as well as the marquee itself, create the streamlined horizontal emphasis found in other movie theaters of this style. The theater is a unique example of academic architectural styling applied to a very modest building. Located in a streetscape of shops, it tends to be conspicuous because of both the façade and the integrated marquee and blade signage.[268]

Movie Theater Design 1950 – 1975

Technological Influences

The Modern Movement style, which became established in theater design in the 1930s, created a new basis for new and renovated variation of the post-World War II small Commercial Block Main Street and Neighborhood Movie Houses in Iowa and other states. The post-war movie house generally featured a modest vestibule and lobby arrangement, or just an entrance lobby which housed a concession stand; the auditorium often lacked a balcony or mezzanine. Although often simpler in form and appearance than their pre-war cousins, these theaters incorporated the most modern technology, including distributed air ventilation and innovations in acoustics and projection, as well as adaptation to wide-screen technology as it evolved.[269]

Of particular note in technological changes that influenced design of new movie theaters at this time was the advent of cellulose triacetate “safety film” which replaced the highly flammable cellulose nitrate film.

[268] Longstreth, 51.
[269] Valentine, 108-109.

Despite its low flashpoint, motion picture production utilized nitrate film almost exclusively prior to 1952. In 1948, Eastman Kodak announced a 35 mm tri-acetate film for the motion picture industry to replace the highly flammable cellulose nitrate film. In 1954, the company began marketing acetate base film products. The most obvious benefit of what became known as "safety film" was that it was no more flammable than paper and was universally accepted by studios and theater owners.

Prior to this time, fire usually started when the nitrate film jammed in the film gate where the heat of the projection light ignited it. Fires were common despite the fact that projectors had fire rollers to smother burning film as it passed through. Some projectors even had steel or copper water lines to cool the gate. However, these features were not deemed sufficient to protect the public and, after several disastrous fires, municipal fire codes regulated the design and construction materials of motion picture projection rooms in public assembly venues. These building codes were fairly uniform from city to city. They specified room dimensions to allow space for plenty of fresh air ventilation between projectors,[270] film storage areas, and film cleaning and repair tables, as well as temperature control. They variously required masonry walls, explosion panels, metal and/or asbestos lined walls and ceilings, and steel door exits (some on rolling tracks,) as well as steel shutters that worked like a guillotine that covered the projection port windows. Heat fused linked metal chains hung over projectors and connected through rollers to heavy weights and then to the metal shutters and door(s). The heat of a fire would melt the fuse and the weights would drop, triggering the automatic rapid close of the shutters and door. The enclosure would then contain the fire. All furniture and fixtures were metal or ceramic. Toilet facilities assured that the projectionist would not need to leave the room during exhibition of movies.

Even after the wide-spread conversion to safety film in the early 1950s, most theaters left their booths and equipment in place. The New York City building code in 1957 provided specifications for booths that used both cellulose triacetate and the earlier cellulose nitrate films. Codes governing new construction of projection booths solely using safety film did not require specific size dimensions for booths, thus allowing changes in the traditional early twentieth century movie theater floor plans. However, the projection equipment produced large amounts of heat and required ventilation systems. Often codes mandated a separate exhaust system for each projector. Uniformly throughout the country, beginning in the 1950s, codes required a posted sign denoting that the projection room was to be used for safety film

[270] The use of multiple reel projectors and two projectors began with the advent of feature films (2,000 feet of film) and shorts (1,000 feet of film).

only. Asbestos continued to be used as fireproofing of walls of the new projection booths.[271] By the late 1970s municipalities and states outlawed the use of nitrocellulose film in public exhibition of movies.

Architectural Influences

Because of the war there were a relatively small number of theaters built between the end of the movie palace era in the late 1930s and the period when television became common in 1952. Generally, and particularly in Iowa, post-World War II movie theater design shifted to a stripped-down, post-war version of the International Style or, more rarely, the Art Moderne style. Both styles reflected popular post-war commercial design and cost far less per square foot than most high-style movie theaters of the 1920s and 1930s.[272] These architectural treatments reflected the industrial design (in particular, transportation-related) propagated during the war, creating a new visually dynamic aesthetic. Curving lines, horizontal emphasis, and smooth surfaces projected a powerful modern, up-to-date image. This streamlined styling provided a break with the past and an optimistic expression of faith in the future that characterized the post-war mentality.[273]

Movie theater auditoria featured bold lines and a proscenium framed by large graphics (with the advent of the wide-screen technology, the proscenium disappeared). Recessed lighting, neon, and black-light effects in continuous coves became popular. In small theaters, it became common to install a small partition below the balcony to create a small foyer or passageway that served as an anteroom for the auditorium. Visibility from automobiles and convenient parking affected location, lot coverage, style, and graphics more than in previous decades.[274] Other features which became common during this period were the crying room for parents accompanied by children (a concession to the post-war "baby boom"), a return to smaller auditoria (in comparison to movie palace dimensions), and changes developed during wartime construction, such as: laminated wood and arched wide span auditoria.[275]

In Iowa, as in other states, many older movie theaters underwent renovation during this period and received new "modern" interior and exterior treatments. Architects and owners applied pastel-colored

[271] Gordon R. Bachuend, P.E., "An Historical Perspective" in *Film Collecting Basic* http://www.film-center.com/glo.htm (acessed August 30, 2011).
[272] Gomery, 73.
[273] Valentine, 110.
[274] Ibid., 159.
[275] Another post-war design innovation was the conversion of salvaged military Quonset huts into movie theaters. Survey information in Iowa does not indicate a large enough number of converted Quonset huts to establish a pattern, and to qualify as a property type.

structural glass tiles, glass block, and more streamlined marquees to the dated façades of their pre-war movie houses. On the interior, they added concession stands and updated the décor to reflect the intimacy of the modern living room rather than the grandeur of the palace.

The Drive-in Movie Theater

The initial appeal of the drive-in movie theater occurred during a period still hampered by the continuing shortage of building materials and the initial white migration to the suburbs. The drive-in required far fewer materials as it was basically an outdoor parking area with a screen at one end and a projection booth at the other. After paying admission at a building along the drive into the theater, moviegoers drove to parking spaces that typically sloped upwards at the front to give a more direct view of the movie screen. The patron usually viewed the movie through the windshield, although it became a common practice to view from the hood of the car. Portable loudspeakers, with an adjustable volume located by each parking space, provided the sound; later, some theaters broadcast on an FM radio frequency. An area, usually in front of the theater screen, contained playground equipment for pre-movie entertainment for children. Based on a review of the inventory of Iowa drive-in movie theaters on-line, it appears the minimum capacity of the drive-in theater was around 150.

The concession stand was a central component of the facility and an important source of revenue. One story in height and usually constructed of concrete block (CMU), it contained restroom facilities as well a concession counter dispersing candy, ice cream, sodas, hot dogs and other items that became the fast foods of the era.

Malls and Multiplexes

The migration of white middle-class Americans to the suburbs led to the practice of locating theaters near shopping centers or within suburban shopping malls. By 1963, most of the theaters that opened were small or moderate sized single screen theaters built in shopping centers.[276] The rapid development of shopping centers in the 1950s and 1960s[277] reflected a sophisticated approach to investment that combined market research, finance, design, leasing, and management. Aiding the development of this new commercial phenomenon was the Urban Land Institute and the publication, *Shopping Towns U.S.A.* published in 1960 by architect planner Victor Gruen.

[276] Valentine., 127.
[277] Suburban shopping centers grew from 2,900 in 1958 to 7,100 in 1963, to 22,000 in 1980.

Based on the symbiotic relationship between anchor tenants, such as department stores and small specialty stores, the movie theater located in suburban malls was barely distinguishable from the commercial storefronts of the shopping center.[278] These movie theaters presented a sleek homogenous image on the outside and, on the inside, lacked a stage or a proscenium arch. They featured only one lobby, which held a large concession counter. The decoration of this space reflected the modern living room of the period: paneled wood walls, a modern chandelier, and full-length windows looking out on the interior center mall of the shopping center or exterior parking spaces. The viewing experience continued the living room aesthetic: comfortable chairs, expanded leg room and a restful environment that served as a prelude to immersion in the viewing experience.

The first malls of the 1950s in Iowa were essentially two strips of storefronts arranged face to face, creating an outdoor "mall" or courtyard between. By the end of the decade, open or enclosed shopping centers were the preferred venue for exhibiting movies, a central component required by developers and financial backers of new retail ventures. The addition of theaters provided an entertainment venue to the shopping experience that constituted the mall revenue stream for the next forty years. By 1964, single screen motion picture theaters in the United States were in 7,600 shopping centers. By 1972, the number (now including twin theaters) rose to 13,174. "The trend ballooned in the 1960s and exploded in the 1970s, topping out in the 1980s."[279]

The mall movie theater was usually at the end or in the middle of the main concourse within a defined retail area. The open entrance area featured a ticket counter, a nearby ticket-box behind a rope, and, further in, a concession stand area. One entered the auditorium through double doors directly from the reception and concession areas. Twin-screen theaters in malls featured a central ticket counter, flanking ticket boxes, and roping, and a central concession stand flanked by doors leading into the auditorium.

Built in the 1960s as a part of the Merle Hay Regional Mall complex, the Plaza Cinema, which operated between 1967-1987, had the largest screen in Des Moines. With the exception of the size of the screen, the original theater was typical of early single-screen mall theaters.[280] Designed by architect, Henry G. Green

[278] Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture* (New York: PLUME, Penguin Putnam Inc., 1998), 315.
[279] Melnick and Fuchs, 126.
[280] Although the screen reportedly still survives, extensive interior and exterior modifications, beginning in the early 1990s reveal little of the original design. When it reopened after renovation it was called the Merle Hay Plaza Theatre.

for the independent ABC Theater chain, the theater seated 800 and was one of three theaters utilizing the same interior floor plan.[281] Located at one end of the mall complex, the exterior of the two-story contemporary design featured unadorned blank brick walls and a cantilevered entrance roof covering the first story portion of the façade. Designed for efficient operation with state-of-the-art sound, a 70mm projection system, and a large screen, the Plaza Cinema provided a state-of-the-arts experience for viewing first-run movies.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, multiple-screen theaters became the norm, and many of the earlier single or twin screen venues of the 1960s and 1970s were, by the late 1970s, quickly retrofitted with the addition of one or two more theaters. They all shared a single foyer area incorporating the ticket box, concession stand, and restroom facilities. Many of these theaters featured new stadium seating, which dated back to the 1920s. The seating consisted of sharply raked rows of seats extending from in front of the screen back towards the ceiling, providing patrons with a clear sight line over the heads of those seated in front of them.

As the multiplex evolved after the mid-1960s, it became a self-standing building featuring up to eight box-shaped theaters, each usually seating less than 300 patrons. When built within shopping malls, multiplexes featured small auditoria with small screens and cinder-block walls that provided a marginally satisfactory site for watching the movies.[282]

One improvement in the 1960s was the xenon bulb, a steady-burning, long-lasting light source that replaced the carbon arc in motion picture projectors. Automated platter projectors allowed for the entire program — trailers, advertisements, and feature films — to be placed on one reel that required no rewinding. In the 1970s, significant improvement in the quality of theatrical sound reproduction occurred, in particular the Dolby noise reduction system that became an industry standard in the next decade.

Typical examples of the types of multiplex movie theaters built at this time are the Clinton Theatre in Clinton, Iowa, which opened in 1936 with seating listed at 622. It is typical of the practice of conversion of Main Street theaters to twin venues. Central State Theaters acquired the theater in 1969 and later renamed it the Capri III after adding a third auditorium. Representative of the construction of new

[281] The other two theaters were in Cedar Rapids and Moline, Illinois.
[282] "From Multiplex to Megaplex," *Film Reference*, http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Romantic-Comedy-Yugoslavia/Theaters-FROM-MULTIPLEX-TO-MEGAPLEX.html#ixzz15ahE5ab8 (accessed November 4, 2010).

multiplex theaters in shopping malls in Iowa is the Eastgate, a three-screen theater erected in the Eastgate Shopping Center in Des Moines in the 1960s. Opened in 1966 by the Davis Theatres ownership group, it was originally billed as "Cinemas I & II" until the addition of a third theater, at which time it became the "Eastgate Cinemas III."[283]

By the mid-1980s the era of the multiplex came to an end. Replacing this phase of movie theater development was the megaplex, a dramatic departure from the boxy mall and shopping center twin cinemas of the 1960s and early 1970s. Usually located in a vast parking lot in a freestanding building, the megaplex incorporated fifteen or more screens under the same roof. The Century 20 Jordan Creek (which opened in 2005 as part of the Jordan Creek Town Center development and operated by Century Theaters) was at its debut one of the largest multiplexes in Iowa.[284]

**IOWA'S PROLIFIC MOVIE THEATER ARCHITECTURAL FIRM:
WETHERELL AND HARRISON, ARCHITECTS**

A review of the updated movie theater database maintained by the State Historical Society of Iowa, reveals only one Iowa architectural firm that designed a significant number of theaters that remain extant in the state.

The founder of the firm that became known as Wetherell and Harrison was Frank Eli Wetherell, born in 1869 in Ohio. By the age of ten, his family moved to Oskaloosa, Iowa. He studied civil engineering and architecture at the University of Iowa between 1889 and 1893. Frank began his own architectural practice and his earliest known commission was the B. Weeks House in Oskaloosa. He appears in the 1900 census as an "architect and builder" living with his wife, Amy, their son, Edwin, and Wetherell's father, Henry, a carpenter. As a sole practitioner, Frank Wetherell designed numerous houses, as well as libraries, a theater, and a school. A review of the Iowa Statewide Inventory Database of the State Historical Society of Iowa reveals that he designed more than forty buildings in Oskaloosa alone; among them the Oskaloosa library, city hall, and fire station.
In 1905, Frank Wetherell moved his family to Des Moines where he joined Oliver O. Smith to form the firm Smith and Wetherell. Alvah J. Gage joined the firm in 1907 and, for one year, the firm was Smith, Wetherell and Gage. Smith left the firm the following year and Wetherell and Gage operated until about 1917, during which time they became the principal design firm for the Des Moines school system. They

[283] Cinematreasures.org.
[284] Ibid.

designed at least forty-eight buildings, primarily institutional buildings including libraries, schools, and a courthouse. Around 1925, Wetherell formed a partnership with Roland Harrison which lasted until 1931. Wetherell, became a member of the Iowa Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1907, and served as chapter president in 1911 and 1912. Wetherell was active the City Beautiful Movement in Des Moines, prepared the plans for the improvement of the riverfront, and served on the city's boulevard committee. He was founder and first president of the Iowa Town Planning Association and instrumental in the passing of Des Moines' first zoning ordinance in 1924.

Roland Goucher (Tip) Harrison, born in 1888, was a native of Des Moines. He attended high school in Des Moines. In 1905, he began working for the firm of Hallett and Rawson as a draftsman. Between 1910 and 1925, he worked as a draftsman and prepared specifications at the prominent Des Moines architectural firm of Proudfoot, Bird, and Rawson.[285] In 1915-1916, he apparently left the firm briefly to attend the Harvard University graduate school of architecture. He served in the civilian construction Division of Chemical Plants in World War I. Upon his return to the Proudfoot firm, he worked in specifications and became chief draftsman in 1917. In 1925, he began a practice with Frank Wetherell. His architectural license in Iowa ran from July 1, 1927 through 1953. He served in World War II. He was a member of the Board of Assessment Review for the City of Des Moines and was a member of the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter and the Des Moines Engineer's Society.[286] He died in Des Moines in 1988.

Edwin Henry Wetherell, born in 1895 in Peoria, Illinois, was the son of Frank Wetherell. He attended Drake University for two years and studied engineering at the University of Illinois (1917-1918 and 1921-1922). In 1917-1918, he also worked as Chief Draftsman for the Telephone Company in Des Moines. He served in the United States Navy in World War I. In 1919, he worked for the Louis Gold Construction Company in Brooklyn, New York, as a draftsman. He joined his father's firm as a

[285] United States Selective Service System, World War I Draft Registration Card for Roland Goucher Harrison. Polk County, Iowa: 1917. Database online. http://www.ancestry.com (accessed May 24, 2010); and George S. Koyle, *American Architects Dire*ctory (New York: American Institute of Architects and R. R. Bowker Company, 1955, 232.
http://www.communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki%20Pages/1956%20American%20Architects%20Dctionary.aspx (accessed August 29, 2011).

[286] "American Institute for Architects Questionnaire for Architects' Roster" *The Architects' Roster, 1946-53 (New York: American Institute of Architects, 1953). American Institute of Architects* Archives. New York, New York. http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/roster.aspx (accessed August 20, 2011).

draftsman in 1922.[287] In 1927, he secured a license to practice architecture in Iowa and began work in that capacity. He became a partner in the firm with Harrison in 1933, and secured licenses to practice architecture in Illinois (1935) and Nebraska (1938). As part of his architectural and engineering studies, he traveled widely in North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. During World War II he served as Director of Building Services for the USO. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects, the American Society of Civil Engineers, and the Society of Military Engineers.[288]

In the early 1930s, the firm of Wetherell and Harrison (Roland Goucher (Tip) Harrison and Edwin Henry Wetherell) began to specialize in movie theater design through connections with independent theater operators and, later with large theater developers such as Central States Theatre Corporation and Tri-States Theatre Corporation. During this period, the firm served on the architectural advisory staff of the Modern Theatre Planning Institute. They designed more than one hundred theaters throughout Iowa, as well as several in Illinois and Nebraska, including a number of drive-in theaters constructed during the 1960s.[289]

By the 1950s, the firm continued to engage in a general architectural practice, and employed eight draftsmen and two superintendents, as well as contracting with consulting engineers. The firm maintained long-term consulting associations with structural engineer S. F. Nydam of Peterson and Appell of Chicago and Des Moines; the plumbing, electrical, heating and ventilating engineering firms of Stevenson and Pulley, B E. Landes, and the Harry F. Wilson, all of Des Moines; landscape architects, Robinson and Parnhan, Des Moines; and civil engineer, Bert H. Shivers, Des Moines. The firm also collaborated with Tinsley, Higgins and Lightner architects of Des Moines.[290] Among the firm's notable projects in Iowa were:

INSTITUTIONAL AND GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONS

1922 Lincoln School, Oskaloosa

1960-62 Pearson Hall at Iowa State, Ames.

1952 State Office Building, Des Moines

[287] Koyle, 1956.

[288] "American Institute for Architects Questionnaire for Architects' Roster" *The Architects' Roster, 1946-53.*

[289] By the mid-1970s, the firm began a series of shifts in ownership resulting in various firm names including Wagner Marquart Wetherell (c. 1976); Wetherell, Ericsson (Larry), Leusink Architects (c. 2003); and Wagner Ericsson (c. 2006), which merged with RDG Design in 2007. RDG Design maintains many of the firm's original plans.

[290] "American Institute for Architects Questionnaire for Architects' Roster," *The Architects' Roster, 1946-53.*

1927 Scottish Rite Building, Des Moines
1930 St. John's Episcopal Church, Mason City
1930 Iowa National Guard Armory, Des Moines
1933 U.S. Post Office Addition, Des Moines
1941 State Office Building, Des Moines
1943 W.A.A. C. Camp, Fort Des Moines
c1944 Iowa Methodist Hospital, Des Moines
1948 Park Avenue School, Des Moines
1948 Municipal Auditorium, Des Moines
1950 Story County Hospital
1950 Rosary Hospital, Cornell
1951 Virginia Gay Hospital, Vinton
1951 Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Des Moines
1952 Finley Hospital Extension, Dubuque
1953 Audubon County Hospital
1955 Shenandoah National Guard Armory
1957 Herbert Hoover Birthplace, Blacksmith Shop reconstruction, West Branch
1960-62 Pearson Hall at Iowa State, Ames

COMMERCIAL COMMISSIONS

1947-49 N. W. Bell Telephone building
1949 the Coca Cola Bottling Company
1953 Central Life Insurance Company
1951 Western Mutual insurance Company

A SAMPLING OF KNOWN WETHERELL AND HARRISON THEATERS

1928 Camelot Theater, Nevada, IA
1930 Mahaska Theater, Oskaloosa, IA
1935 Castle Theater, Manchester, IA
1934 Charles Theater, Charles City, IA
1936-37 Capitol Theater, Des Moines, IA
1937 Collegian Theater, Ames, IA
1937 Capitol Theater, Burlington, IA
c.1938 Hiland Theater, Des Moines, IA
1938 Varsity Theater, Ames, IA
c. 1939 Esquire Theater, Davenport, IA
1939 Rialto Theater, Pocahontas, IA
1939 Burlington Theatre, Burlington, IA
c1941 Illini Theater, Moline, IL
1942 Ottumwa Theater, Ottumwa, IA
c.1942 Capitol Theater, Sioux City, IA
1946 Sioux Theatre, Sioux Rapids, IA
1947 Fort Armstrong Theatre, Rock Island, IL
1948 Wampas Theatre, Keosauqua, IA
1951 Capital Theatre, Newton, IA
1953 LeClaire Theatre, Moline, IL
1964 Starlite Drive-In, Waterloo, IA
1964 Bonham Theatre, Fairbury, NE
1965 Ranch Drive-In, Ames, IA
1966 Collins Road Drive-In, Cedar Rapids, IA
1969 Town Drive-In, Altoona, IA
1970 Algona Drive-In, Algona, IA

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

There are seven property types associated with the historic context "Historic Development of Movie Theaters in Iowa, 1880 – 1975." Five property types have associations with live performing arts in association with the commercial exhibition of moving pictures — (1) Community Halls, including second floor spaces in existing buildings; (2) Opera House Movie Theaters; (3) Conversion Movie Theaters; (4) Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses; and (5) Movie Palaces. Two have exclusive associations with the commercial exhibition of motion pictures only — (1) Drive-in Theaters and (2) Multiplex Theaters.

Iowa Movie theaters are significant for their association with the historic context "Development of Movie Theaters in Iowa 1880-1975" and the historic subcontexts:

- "Historic Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries in Iowa: 1880 – 1917"
- "Rise of the Motion Picture: 1900 – 1930**"**
- "State-wide Impact of Era of Centralization and Domination of Movie Theater Chains, 1920 – 1948"
- "Movie Theater Development in Iowa in the Great Depression and the War Years: 1930 – 1946"
- "Iowa Movie Theaters in the Post-World War II Period and Era of Suburbanization: 1946 – 1975"
- "Evolution of Movie Theater Design in Iowa, 1900 – 1975"

Venues for regular commercial exhibition of moving pictures to the public may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the criteria established in National Register Bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* under National Register Criteria A and/or B for the areas of ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION, PERFORMING ARTS, ETHNIC HERITAGE, SOCIAL HISTORY, and COMMERCE and under Criterion C for the area of ARCHITECTURE. The significance of each property requires important associations with a significant historic context or important aspects of that context, and must additionally be important individually in its locality, the state, and/or the nation as a functional and/or architectural property type or sub-type that retains integrity from its period of significance.

COMMUNITY HALLS

Description

As part of the historic context "Historic Movie Theaters of Iowa, "1880 – 1975," the Community Halls property type functioned as a movie theater through the exhibition of moving pictures during a defined period in the history of the building or associated space within a building. In Iowa, the construction of Community Halls generally began in the late 1830s and continued through circa 1930, corresponding with the establishment of settlements across the state with a sufficient population base as to warrant commercial exhibition of moving pictures. Community Halls, erected with public or private funding, performed a wide variety of functions, including serving as venues for theatrical and musical performances, town meetings, fraternal and social organizations, educational events, and athletic and military demonstrations. They were large open rooms with movable seating that could be arranged to suit a specific event or occasion. Additional features might include a raised stage, dressing rooms, fixed seating, and, more rarely, a raked floor.

By the late nineteenth century, it was common for the Community Hall to occupy space on the second or third floor of a commercial block building in the heart of the downtown area, sharing space with retail businesses, fraternal organization meeting rooms, offices of professionals, and government administrative spaces. Some communities erected stand-alone buildings to serve as Community Halls. In the smallest, most rural communities, local governments helped finance Community Halls that hosted live performances and often included government offices as well.

Community Halls initially occupied vernacular wood frame, brick, or stone buildings. After World War I, the memorial building property type, which often had a large open gymnasium and stage, often referenced Colonial or Classical Revival designs. High school buildings also provided Community Hall space in auditoria or in gymnasium space with a raised stage. Ornamentation was simple and reflected the popular commercial or institutional styles of the period of construction. For example, a brick two-part commercial block building that housed a Community Hall might feature elements of Italianate, Late Victorian, Romanesque Revival, or Colonial Revival architecture. Ornamental wood or cast iron storefronts and cornices, ornamental window surrounds, arched windows, and decorative parapets were among the common exterior features of these buildings. Some Community Halls occupied two-story spaces with a partial second story, indicating the presence of a balcony with an upper level hall or anteroom. The interior of the Community Hall usually featured simple treatments such as plaster and/or

fire tile walls and plaster ceilings and wood floors. The absence of ornate finishes and fixtures distinguishes them from the contemporaneous Opera House property type.

Significance

Community Halls reflect the historic contexts outlined in Section E of this Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) for their significance under National Register Criteria A and/or B for the areas of ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION, PERFORMING ARTS, COMMERCE, ETHNIC HERITAGE, and SOCIAL HISTORY and Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. In addition to the criteria for significance as outlined in *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, Community Halls eligible for listing in the National Register must have significant associations with this MPDF's context, "Historic Development of Iowa Movie Theaters: 1880 – 1975," including information in the Introduction and background information affecting the temporal contexts. Moreover, Communities Halls must have important associations with the specific subcontexts, "Historic Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries in Iowa: 1880 – 1917," and "The Rise of the Motion Picture: 1900 – 1930." In general these contexts reflect the expansion of settlement across Iowa and the establishment of permanent communities with an economic base sufficient to address non-essential needs, such as popular entertainment. Community Halls were important venues for the presentation of live programs provided by touring lecture series (circuits) that added short, silent movies to their usual offerings of photographic slides or magic lantern shows. These spaces or buildings are historically important as one of the earliest venues for the commercial exhibition of movies in a community and added a new public entertainment and commercial component to the local economy. These venues also hosted community gatherings, lectures, meetings, educational activities, musical concerts, minstrel shows, variety performances and local talent productions. They may have associations with a specific event such as the location of one or more early "jackrabbit" tours by independent exhibitors who traveled a circuit with projector and electric generator to show moving pictures in a community hall room. They may be significant as an early venue for silent movies in a community shown in the rented rooms owned by private fraternal groups. They may be significant as part of a pattern of leisure-time entertainment in a community as the location for the regular movie exhibition and provide an important commercial benefits to the community.

In African American communities and enclaves, they may be significant as the only venues for either regular, sporadic, singular, or rare showings of movies produced and distributed by blacks.

The significance of this property type rests not only with its associations with important events or a pattern of events of the aforementioned contexts, but also with the significance of the movie venue itself Significance of Community Halls must meet the guidelines and criteria for individual significance as outlined in *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.* This property type has significance at the local and/or state level. The following list provides examples of possible standards of significance in accordance to the National Register Criteria listed above for Community Halls but is not limited to, the following:

Criterion A-1 Community Halls that illustrate during the first two decades of the twentieth century the initial development of communities of sufficient population to support regular commercial exhibition of moving pictures.

Criterion A-2 Community Halls associated with periods of commercial growth within a community.

Criterion A-3 Community Halls that were early venues for the exhibition of moving pictures, thus adding an important public entertainment component attracting local patrons as well as those from the surrounding area, thus adding a new commercial dynamic to the local economy.

Criterion A-4 Community Halls that were associated with various commercial entertainment circuits for live entertainment, which also exhibited motion pictures.

Criterion A-5 Community Halls that were the only location in a given community in which moving pictures were presented commercially on a regular basis, thus stimulating the expenditure of discretionary funds by the public in the general locality and generating jobs, expenditures for supplies and services, and local and state revenues.

Criterion A-6 Community Halls that introduced new movie exhibition technologies into a local or the state ,such as talking pictures.

Criterion A-7 Community Halls that introduced new commercial practices to the management of commercial movie exhibition, such as sales of confections or 3-D movies to a locality.

Criterion A-8 Community Halls that reflect the stratification or segregation and/or integration of religious, racial, economic, and other social groups through *de facto* practices, management policies, and/or location.

Criterion B-1 Community Halls that have a singular, significant association with a person whose individual efforts, success, talent, and/or ingenuity contributed to the historic development of motion picture exhibition in the State of Iowa, or to a specific community in Iowa.

Criterion C-1 Community Halls that introduced or illustrated technological or physical changes associated with the commercial exhibition of movies.

Criterion C-2 Community Halls that reflects changes in form, plan, and design of the building type in response to significant health and safety trends and/or specific regulations relating to the exhibition of movies.

Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for listing under Criterion A, Community Halls must have functioned for a finite period sometime between 1880 and 1930 as a early, rare, or notable commercial venue for the early exhibition of moving pictures. Such properties must have 1) historic architectural integrity dating to their period of significance in exhibition of moving pictures; 2) important associations with a significant event or pattern of events within the aforementioned context and subcontexts of Section E of this Multiple Property Documentation Form, and 3) each property's association with specific historic contexts must itself be considered significant as well. For example, a Commercial Hall significant or its associations in commercial and public entertainment history of a locality could be a Community Hall that represents a town's growth as the commercial focus of the surrounding agricultural area. Another example of significance under Criterion A are those Community Halls with important links to Ethnic Heritage due to associations with a particular ethnic group that played a sponsoring role in the commercial exhibition of mainstream movies, or in the commercial exhibition of motion pictures written, produced, distributed, and acted in by individuals sharing a common ethnic or racial heritage prior.

In some cases, to qualify for listing under either Criterion A or B, for significance in Ethnic Heritage, Community Halls may be subject to National Register Criteria Consideration G. The Community Halls

property type includes properties that may continue to achieve significance into a period less than fifty years before their nomination to the National Register because of the passage of federal public accommodation legislation that dates to 1964, and the subsequent lags in time before implementation of federal statutes outlawing such discrimination Due to the dates associated with the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and early 1970s, Criteria Consideration G also affects Community Halls that are more than fifty years old but had no significance in Ethnic Heritage until a period less than fifty years before the nomination.

To qualify for listing under Criterion B, Community Halls must have a significant association with an individual who made a singular contribution to the public commercial exhibition of mainstream motion pictures or to the exhibition of movies sharing a common ethnic or racial heritage with the audience.

To qualify for listing under Criterion C, Community Halls must reflect the defining architectural characteristics, including interior and exterior architectural features and construction practices, as defined in the description section for this property sub-type. In particular, Community Halls must retain the pattern of features associated with the commercial exhibition of moving pictures in public or privately owned Community Halls in Iowa.

Historic Architectural Integrity

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the physical characteristics and architectural qualities in the description section of this property type must be sufficiently illustrated and the property must retain sufficient quality of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship, to convey feelings of the Community Halls' period of significance and associations with the aforementioned areas of significance under National Register Criteria A, B, and/or C. Generally, this requires that eligible Community Halls to retain historic architectural integrity of their period of significance.

The auditorium space within Community Halls where exhibition of motion pictures occurred must remain intact. In these buildings, if there originally was a separate exterior entrance to the auditorium space where such exhibition took place, this feature should remain intact and distinct. Many Community Halls did not have permanent seating; even if this feature was part of the original design, it is not critical that it remain intact. While the exterior architecture of the commercial block buildings or institutional buildings that housed Community Hall spaces should retain a high degree of integrity related to the Community Hall's period of significance in association with the exhibition of movies, the building can only be

nominated for its significance under this context if the historic Community Hall spaces remain intact. (If the hall is no longer intact, the building may still be eligible for National Register listing under another context unrelated to this MPDF, such as other associations with commerce or architecture in its community. In addition to the above requirements, for Community Halls to be listed:

- the openings on the primary façade of a Community Halls property type building or buildings housing community halls should be unaltered or altered in a sensitive and appropriate manner, using similar materials, profiles, and sizes as the original building elements;
- the original exterior materials and architectural features of these buildings should remain intact and exposed;
- significant, character-defining decorative elements present during the period of significance should be intact;
- design elements intrinsic to the building's style and plan during the period of significance should be intact;
- the overall feeling or character of the building for the time period in which it was significant for the commercial exhibition of movies should be intact; and
- changes over a period of time in color and materials should be sympathetic and compatible to the design during its period of significance.

Increased age and rarity of the property type may be considered in assessing the above criteria.

OPERA HOUSE MOVIE THEATERS

Description

A more complex arrangement of interior spaces and higher quality finishes and fixtures distinguish the Opera House Movie Theater property type from the Community Halls property type. Opera Houses in Iowa were larger and more ornate buildings erected primarily for hosting live theatrical and musical productions, variety acts, as well as functions similar to those held in Community Halls. Opera Houses[1] erected in Iowa prior to 1900 exhibited a wide variety of designs. Even theaters built concurrently or within a few years of each other often differed significantly. However, certain common trends occurred.

[1] For more detailed description of Opera Houses prior to their use as movie theaters, see the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Footlights in Farm Country: Iowa Opera Houses, 1835-1940" available at the State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, Iowa.

The first Opera Houses appeared in upper floor theater locations in large commercial buildings. However, a general trend beginning in the late nineteenth century toward ground floor theaters occurred. Commercial blocks usually housed the second floor theaters until after 1910, when building Opera Houses on the ground floor within a commercial block or erecting a free-standing building became common. There was also a trend toward buildings with a more theater-specific function as compared to the distinctly utilitarian or multi-purpose designs of Community Halls.

Interior design and furnishings also varied greatly. Some contained one or two balconies, with or without box seats, raked auditorium floors, permanent seating, decorative wall treatments and ornate lighting fixtures. The main design feature of the stage was the embellished proscenium. Other theaters had plain walls of painted plaster, with simple stenciling or other drapery, straight wooden chairs or benches, a raised stage and a painted proscenium. Only the larger houses provided dressing room spaces. Opera Houses in Iowa utilized fly lofts and roll drops for scenery as well as sliding wings for scene changes. The form of the building revealed the sophistication of its scenery-changing system. The raised block at the rear of the Opera House suggests the presence of a fly loft, while a flat roof suggests that a theater employed a simpler system. Opera Houses built prior to the 1880s typically featured a deep stage, proscenium boxes, and a horseshoe-shaped auditorium. By the end of the Opera House era, from circa 1890 into the early twentieth century, smaller fan-shaped auditoriums featuring a shallow picture-frame stage and box seats on the side walls and above the orchestra were common.

The adaptation of the Opera House to a movie theater required the construction of a fire-proof projection booth at the rear wall, often in the second balcony space. In Opera Houses with two balconies, the shift to movies as the primary attraction often led to the removal of the upper balcony as there was no economic benefit in pricing inexpensive movie admission based on seating area. A screen was often painted in silver on the back wall of the stage. Another approach was the erection of a self-supported painted screen (sometimes with gold tinting to produce a sepia effect). The new screen was at the back of the stage, to allow for continuation of live entertainment as part of the larger theater experience.

Most Opera Houses had an orchestra pit to allow the voices of the performers to carry over the orchestration. The advent of movie exhibition often included the placement of an organ in the pit. Side alcoves under the theater boxes also housed pianos and harps.

While the form of opera theater buildings continued to adapt the two-part commercial block form typical of nineteenth century Main Street, special attention was given to both the interior and exterior design of

the building. Of note was the large central wall plane incorporating a large window covering the upper stories. The interior appearance of Opera Houses varied greatly. Some were quite elegant, with fancy plaster moldings, rich woodwork, plush seats, box seats, and ornate light fixtures that complemented the Victorian design of the exterior. The builders of Iowa Opera Houses also adapted simpler variations of the architectural property type and applied them to vernacular commercial block forms, such as ornate window hoods, molded cornices, corbelled brickwork, and arched windows and doorways. Because of the danger of fire in places of public assembly, the Opera House property type erected in Iowa after the Civil War was a masonry building.

Significance

Opera House Movie Theaters are significant to the historic context and subcontexts outlined in Section E of this Multiple Property Documentation Form for their significance under National Register Criteria A and/or B for the areas of ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION, PERFORMING ARTS, COMMERCE, and SOCIAL HISTORY. In addition to the criteria for significance for individual buildings as outlined in National Register Bulletin 15: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, the significance of Opera House Movie Theaters derives from direct associations with this MPDF's context, "Historic Development of Iowa Movie Theaters: 1880 – 1975," including information in the Introduction and background information affecting the temporal contexts.[2] In addition the property type as associations with the specific subcontexts "Historic Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries in Iowa: 1880 – 1917," and "The Rise of the Motion Picture: 1900 – 1930."[3] In general these contexts reflect significant associations with the expansion of settlement across Iowa and the establishment of permanent communities with an economic base sufficient to address non-essential needs, such as popular entertainment, in particular, the erection of a local "opera house edifice." Moreover, the incorporation of movie theaters into the opera house building is an important reflection of the mature nature of the community with a growing economic base sufficient to support buildings for non-essential needs, and the growth of a middle-class population with discretionary spending.

Opera House Movie theaters were initially important commercial and entertainment venues for the presentation of live programs provided by touring lecture series (circuits), and, at some time in the early twentieth century, added short, silent movies to their usual offerings of photographic slides or magic

[2] Ibid., E-1.
[3] Ibid, E-8 and E-17

lantern shows. These spaces or buildings are thus historically important as one of the earliest venues for the commercial exhibition of movies in a community and the state and reflect the influences of a new public entertainment offering as well as an additional component to the commerce of the locale. Much like the Community Halls property type Opera House Movie Theaters also hosted community gatherings, lectures, meetings, educational activities, musical concerts, minstrel shows, variety performances and local talent productions. The significance of this property type rests not only with its associations with important events or a pattern of events of the aforementioned contexts, but also with the significance of the movie venue itself. Significance of Opera House Movie Theaters must be in conformance with the guidelines and criteria for individual significance as outlined in *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.*

Opera House Movie Theaters may also be significant under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE for their pattern of features common to the class of Opera Houses adapted for use as movie theaters, the individuality or variations of features that occurred within that class, the evolution of that class, and the transition between late nineteenth and early twentieth century Opera Houses erected for live performances and the converted Opera House Movie Theater.

As noted, each Opera House Movie Theater property will have at least one important area of significance at the local and/or state level. The following list provides examples of possible standards of significance in accordance to the National Register Criteria:

Criterion A-1 Opera House Movie Theaters that illustrate the adaptation of late nineteenth and early twentieth century opera house theaters for the exhibition of motion pictures.

Criterion A-2 Opera House Movie Theaters that illustrated during the first three decades of the twentieth century the initial development of communities of sufficient population to support regular commercial exhibition of moving pictures.

Criterion A-3 Opera House Movie Theaters associated with periods of commercial growth within a community.

Criterion A-4 Opera House Movie Theaters that were early venues for commercial exhibition of moving pictures that added an important public entertainment venue that attracted not only local patrons, but also those from the surrounding area;

Criterion A-5 Opera House Movie Theaters that were associated with various commercial entertainment circuits for live entertainment, which also exhibited motion pictures.

Criterion A-6 Opera House Movie Theaters that were the only venue in a locality in which moving pictures were presented commercially on a regular basis, thus stimulating the expenditure of discretionary funds by the public and in generating jobs, expenditures for supplies and services, and local and state revenues.

Criterion A-7 Opera House Movie Theaters that introduced new commercial practices or technological features such as talking pictures to a locality.

Criterion A-8 Opera House Movie Theaters that reflect the stratification or segregation and/or integration of religious, racial, economic, and other social groups through management policies, and/or location.

Criterion B-1 An Opera House Movie Theater that has a singular, significant association with a person whose individual success, talent, and/or ingenuity contributed to the historic development of motion picture exhibition in the community, state, or nation.

Criterion B-2 An Opera House Movie Theater that is individually and singularly recognized for the ownership and contributions of one family over a long period of time to the exhibition of movies when such accomplishments of one or more family members is exceptional in the community, state, or nation.

Criterion B-3 An Opera House Movie Theater that is individually and singularly recognized for the contribution of an owner/exhibitor who played an important political or legal role in the exhibition of movies in the community, state or nation.

Criterion C-1 Opera House Movie Theaters that introduced or illustrated technological achievements in the exhibition of movies and that reflect associated changes in form, plan, and/or and design of the Opera House Movie Theater building property type

Criterion C-2 Opera House Movie Theaters that reflect changes in form, plan, and design of the Opera House Movie Theater building type in response to significant health and safety codes and/or specific regulations.

Criterion C-3 Opera House Movie Theaters whose size and stylistic treatment reflects definite periods in the development of the property type specifically.

Criterion C-4 Opera House Movie Theaters that illustrate expressions of architectural styles and vernacular adaptations thereof that are either now rare, notable, or were influential to the aesthetic development of the community's and/or the state's architecture.

Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for listing under Criterion A, Opera House Movie Theaters must have functioned for a finite period between 1880 and 1940 as a commercial public exhibition venue for motion pictures. Opera House Movie Theaters must have originally housed live theatrical performances prior to undergoing conversion for the purpose of commercial exhibition of silent moving pictures, and later, moving pictures with sound. The period of significance of Opera House Movie Theaters must be the period when the exhibition of motion pictures occurred, either with or without accompanying live performances..

To qualify for listing under Criterion B, Opera House Movie Theaters must have a significant association with a person or one family over a long period of time who made a singular or exceptional contribution within a defined historic context to the commercial exhibition of motion pictures in a particular Opera House. Mere ownership or commercial association with an Opera House in conjunction with the exhibition of motion pictures is not sufficient for listing under this Criterion; the association with this property type must directly involve the Opera House Movie Theater during the person's productive life when the significant accomplishment occurred. The Opera House Movie Theater nominated for associations with an important individual or one family over a long period of time should be compared to other associated properties to identify that which best represents the individual's (or family's) specific historic contribution to the exhibition of motion pictures.

To qualify for listing under Criterion C, an Opera House Movie Theater must reflect the defining architectural characteristics, including interior and exterior architectural features and construction practices of its property type, but must retain specific architectural features and stylistic and design

treatments present during the period in which motion pictures were exhibited in this venue, including any important exterior or interior changes.[4] In particular, the Opera House Movie Theater must reflect the technological advancements and architectural and structural changes required in adapting the opera house theater for exhibition of motion pictures, or in providing a safe venue for the exhibition of movies.

Historic Architectural Integrity

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the physical characteristics and architectural qualities in the description section of this property type must be sufficiently illustrated and the property must retain sufficient quality of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship, to convey feelings of the Opera House Movie Theater's period of significance and associations with the aforementioned areas of significance under National Register Criteria A, B, and/or C in this section. Generally, this requires that eligible Opera House Movie Theaters must retain historic integrity of their period of significance.

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B, and/or C, the characteristics and qualities described above must remain sufficiently intact and retain historic architectural integrity to support the significance of the building within appropriate historic contexts. This requires that the property retain the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historical identity as a venue for commercial exhibition of movies. Generally, this requires that an Opera House Movie Theater retain the architectural composition, ornamental details, and materials of its primary exterior elevation and of its interior theater elements at the time movies began to be shown in the facility. Due to the age of these buildings, a certain degree of deterioration and loss is to be expected. Reversible alterations, such as the loss or removal of ornamental detailing, replacement of doors, window sashes and framing elements, and scarring of architectural elements are common and do not necessarily diminish a building's contribution to related historic contexts. In particular, loss of original window sashes and exterior doors is not unusual. However, the essential features that define both why it is significant and when it was significant must be observable, and requires that the original configuration of spaces, including assembly area (lobby and/or vestibule) auditorium, stage, proscenium, balcony, and projection area must remain relatively unaltered. These features communicate the unique feeling of the theater as a distinct movie exhibition property type. Other elements that communicate the historic function include the original entrance and exits to and from the theater space.

[4] Thus, it is expected that the features retained from its movie theater use will also include extant features and treatments that date to its period as an opera house prior to the permanent installation of movie exhibition equipment.

In addition to the above requirements, for a building to be listed under Criteria A, B, and/or C,

- the building's openings on the primary façade should be unaltered or altered in a sensitive and appropriate manner, using similar materials, profiles, and sizes as the building elements during its period of significance;
- the exterior masonry should remain intact and exposed;
- significant, character-defining decorative elements dating to the period of significance should be intact and visible;
- design elements intrinsic to the building's style and plan dating to the period of significance should be intact and visible;
- the overall feeling or character of the building for the time period in which it was significant for the commercial exhibition of movies should be intact; and
- changes over a period of time in color and materials should be sympathetic and compatible to the design during the period of significance.

While the amount and type of interior architectural features and ornamentation varied depending on the size and location of the Opera House Movie Theater, both the exterior and the interior of the building must retain their integrity of design, materials, and workmanship to communicate feelings and associations with the building's historic function as a movie theater. If the building has remained in extended use over a lengthy period, commercial storefront alterations are expected and accepted as long as the original configuration of openings remains or are relatively recent alterations that are reversible and can reestablished the original openings..

If the interior elements and spaces described above are no longer intact, the building may still be eligible for listing in the National Register under another context, such as commerce, architecture, and community planning and development.

CONVERSION MOVIE THEATERS

Description

Conversion Movie Theaters were motion picture exhibition venues established in storefronts and other commercial spaces not specifically designed for commercial exhibition of movies. They were typically located in main street commercial buildings from approximately 1900 to 1915. They occupied vernacular wood frame, brick, or stone buildings. Ornamentation was simple and reflected the popular commercial styles of their period of construction. For example, a brick two-part commercial block building that housed a Conversion Movie Theater might feature elements of Italianate, Late Victorian, Romanesque Revival, or Colonial Revival architecture. Ornamental wood or cast iron storefronts and cornices, ornamental window surrounds, arched windows, and decorative parapets were among the common exterior features of these buildings.

An open interior space with movable or fixed seats and a screen attached to the end of the long wall formed the auditorium. A projection booth sat above the entrance to the auditorium. Other than exterior signage and/or an attached box office, there was little about the outside of the building to distinguish it from any other commercial building use, including the retention of display windows and transoms. Usually the first purpose-built movie theater in a community, the Conversion Movie Theater was initially utilized as a rented hall by itinerant film exhibitors equipped with portable projection machines traveling through small towns. Many of the Conversion Movie Theaters also served as nickelodeon theaters established by businessmen in rented space. Of a more permanent nature, they featured an attached box office, a small vestibule assembly area and small auditorium-like exhibition space with a raised stage and screen at one end and a raised projection booth at the other. A piano or an organ provided accompaniment. They initially had level floors but, if the rental became long-term, raked floors were often installed. Because of the long-narrow plan of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings, they were ideal for projection of silent movies. They easily converted from a grocery, printing office, harness maker, pool hall, skating rink or any of the assorted common commercial uses found in ground floor business houses in small towns and large cities in Iowa.

Significance

Conversion Movie Theaters are significant to the historic contexts outlined in Section E of this Multiple Property Documentation Form for their significance under Criteria A and/or B in the area of ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION, PERFORMING ARTS, COMMERCE, ETHNIC HERITAGE, and/or SOCIAL HISTORY as one of the earliest commercial spaces used specifically for viewing motion pictures. In addition to the criteria for significance as outlined in *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, Conversion Movie Theaters eligible for listing in the National Register must have significant associations with this MPDF's context, "Historic Development of Iowa Movie Theaters: 1880 – 1975," including the general information in the Introduction and background information affecting the temporal contexts.[5] Moreover, Conversion Movie Theaters must have important associations with the subcontexts: "Historic Development of Public Entertainment Venues in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries in Iowa: 1880 – 1917," and "Rise of the Motion Picture: 1900 – 1930,"[6] as elaborated in Section E. This property type is particularly significant as an early venue for the nickelodeon theater, the first theaters devoted exclusively to exhibition of moving pictures, and as the venue that introduced the moving picture to the working and middle classes. They reflect the establishment of permanent communities and locations within early twentieth century communities with sufficient economic base to support non-essential enterprises, such as popular entertainment. They served primarily as venues for silent movies with short live acts that augmented the main attraction, the movie.

The economics of the Conversion Movie Theater such as the nickelodeon were significant in its deviation from previous live theater management. They represent the first permanent homes of films where the owner/exhibitor rented or purchased building space and purchased film by the foot, thus stimulating the onset of distribution of movies nation-wide. The growth of Conversion Movie Theaters marked a significant transition in the film industry in Iowa, as in other states, and revolutionized mass entertainment in towns and cities. The resulting commercial stability encouraged investment in theater ownership/management and film distribution. The significance of this property type is for its local, state and national associations and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

[5] Ibid., E-1
[6] Ibid., E-8 and E-17.

Criterion A-1 Conversion Movie Theaters that illustrated during the first two decades of the twentieth century. a sufficient population to support commercial exhibition of moving pictures as an exclusive attraction.

Criterion A-2 Conversion Movie Theaters, such as nickelodeon theaters, devoted exclusively to the commercial exhibition of moving pictures in buildings specifically converted to movie theaters.

Criterion A-3 Conversion Movie Theaters located near public transportation networks to attract a wide clientele, including immigrants, working- and middle-class audiences, and women and children.

Criterion A-4 Conversion Movie Theaters associated with periods of commercial growth within a community.

Criterion A-5 Conversion Movie Theaters, such as the nickelodeon theater, that provided a continuous program of movies from morning through the evening hours; adding an important differentiated public entertainment venue to a community as well as a singular, new commercial component to public entertainment

Criterion A-6 Conversion Movie Theaters, which by virtue of their location and management, served as an important source stimulating the expenditure of discretionary funds by the public in the general locality and in generating jobs, expenditures for supplies and services, and local and state revenues.

Criterion A-7 Conversion Movie Theaters utilized for the commercial exhibition of movies that reflect stratification or segregation and/or integration of religious, racial, economic, and other social groups through management policies, and/or location.

Criterion B-1 A Conversion Movie Theater that has singular, significant association with individuals whose individual success, talent, and/or ingenuity contributed to the historic development of motion picture exhibition in converted buildings in the community, state, or nation.

Criterion B-2 A Conversion Movie Theater that is recognized for the singular, significant contribution of an owner and/or exhibitor who played an important political or legal role in the exhibition of movies in the community, state or nation.

Criterion C-1 Conversion Movie Theaters that introduced or illustrate technological or physical changes associated with the commercial exhibition of movies in the community.

Criterion C-2 Conversion Movie Theaters that reflect changes in form, plan, and design of a commercial building type in response to significant health and safety codes and/or specific regulations.

Criterion C-3 Conversion Movie Theaters whose stylistic treatment reflects definite periods that occurred during the development of the property type specifically.

Criterion C-4 Conversion Movie Theaters that illustrate renovations that utilized architectural styles and vernacular adaptations thereof that are rare, notable, or influential to the aesthetic development of the community's architecture.

Registration Requirements

As an increasingly rare cultural resource, in order to qualify for listing under Criterion A, Conversion Movie Theaters must have functioned for a finite period of time between 1900 and circa 1915 as a commercial building or ground floor space converted specifically for the commercial public exhibition of motion pictures.

To qualify for listing under Criterion B, Conversion Movie Theaters must have a significant association with a person who made a singular contribution within a defined historic context to the commercial exhibition of motion pictures. Mere ownership or commercial association with a Conversion Movie Theater is not sufficient for listing under this Criterion; the association with this property type must directly involve the movie theater itself during the person's productive life when the significant accomplishment occurred. The Conversion Movie Theater nominated for associations with an important individual should be compared to other associated properties to identify that which best represents the individual's specific historic contribution to the exhibition of motion pictures in converted space.

To qualify for listing under Criterion C, a Conversion Movie Theater must reflect the defining architectural characteristics, including interior and exterior architectural features, plan, and construction practices, as defined in the description section for this property sub-type. In particular, the Conversion Movie Theater must reflect the technological advancements and architectural and structural changes required in converting commercial spaces into silent movie theaters and in providing a safe venue for the

exhibition of movies. Moreover, the Conversion Movie Theater must also reflect aesthetic, stylistic and design treatments specific to the period in which motion pictures were exhibited in this venue.

Historic Architectural Integrity

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the physical characteristics and architectural qualities in the MPDF's description section for this property type must be sufficiently illustrated and the property must retain sufficient quality of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship, to convey feelings of the Conversion Movie Theater's period of significance and associations with the aforementioned areas of significance under National Register Criteria A, B, and/or C in this section. Generally, this requires that eligible Conversion Movie Theaters must retain historic integrity of their period of significance relating to the exhibition of movies prior to the end of World War I. Conversion Movie Theaters often did not have permanent seating; however, if this feature was part of the original design, it is not critical that it remain intact. Nor is it important if it retains the original screen, stage and/or projection box. The exterior and interior architectural features of the commercial block building present when it operated as a Conversion Movie Theater should be present and retain a high degree of integrity. The building can only be nominated for its significance if the exhibition space, including its original walls, floors and ceiling features remain intact. Many of these spaces had raked floors and tin ceilings which have been covered over but remain intact, a condition that contributes to the integrity of the space if exposed. In addition to the above conditions, a Conversion Movie Theater may be nominated under Criteria A, B, and/or C under the following conditions:

- the building's openings on the primary façade should be unaltered or altered in a sensitive and appropriate manner, using similar materials, profiles, and sizes as the original building elements from the period of significance;
- the historic exterior materials dating to the period of significance should remain intact and exposed;
- significant, character-defining decorative elements present during the period of significance should be intact and exposed;
- design elements intrinsic to the building's style and plan during the period of significance should be intact and exposed; and
- the overall feeling or character of the building for the time period in which it was significant for the commercial exhibition of movies should be intact.

If the exhibition hall is no longer intact, the building may still be eligible for listing in the National Register under another context, such as commerce and architecture and nominated under another format than this MPDF.

COMMERCIAL BLOCK DOWNTOWN AND NEIGHBORHOOD MOVIE HOUSES

Description

The Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses were small or medium-sized (less than 1000 seats) purpose-built movie theater buildings constructed in rural communities, in downtowns of cities, or in neighborhood commercial districts which evolved along electric street car lines or bus routes between circa 1915 and 1960. The form of the movie theater was typically a one- or two-part commercial block building that matched the massing of the adjacent commercial streetscape. Their designs were also adaptations of the enframed wall or vault commercial block forms. Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses reflect the latest in fireproof technology of the era of their construction. This included, by the 1920s, steel truss and concrete structural systems and masonry façades.

The primary façades of Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses expressed the popular architecture of their period of construction. Terra cotta, stone, or cast stone architectural elements ornamented the brick commercial block building's façade. They reflected one or more of the styles popular in the early-to-mid twentieth century, including both conservative and exotic use of Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals styles based on historical design antecedents. The use of subtly patterned and textured brick known as Tapestry Brick was also common at this time. The popularity of Modern Movement Art Deco and Art Moderne styles in movie theater design, which began in the late 1920s and continued through the 1940s, introduced new materials to theater façades, including pastel-colored structural glass and ceramic tiles, glass block, chrome, and neon.

Designs that were more generic represent simple late Victorian and early twentieth century commercial buildings that have flat roofs, and traditional movie storefront fenestration and designs. Most decorative, stylistic ornamentation occurred on the upper stories of the façade and included a restrained parapet or a false front treatment; arched or rectangular windows with a stringcourse; and terra cotta or glazed brick ornament separating the ground floor from the upper stories.

The entrance distinguished the exterior of the movie theater from other adjacent one- or two-part commercial block buildings. Before World War II, the entrance was often recessed and the floor, walls, and ceiling of this space often had brick, ceramic tile, or pressed metal ornamentation. Two or more entrances flanked the theater's ticket booth, which usually projected from the center of the building wall. Setting off the entrance was the marquee above. Patrons entered a small vestibule through multiple sets of entrance doors. The vestibule might lead directly to the auditorium, or it might lead into a larger lobby that accessed the auditorium space through another set of doors. Stairs on either end of the lobby provided access to the movie theater's balcony and/or restrooms and lounge. The elevated projection booth was built outside the auditorium walls to provide additional fire protection.

The auditorium was a large open space featuring a raked floor, rows of permanent seats, and a screen on the elevated stage. Because theaters constructed before the age of talking pictures often featured vaudeville acts and other live performances as well as movies, the stages had curtains and rigging for scenery; it was common for the auditorium to accommodate an orchestra pit in front of the stage. Even well into the 1950s, it was not uncommon to find a small stage in a movie theater auditorium. At the same time, the balcony disappeared, in particular due to post-war technology and truss designs that increased the width of auditoria.

After the advent of talking pictures in 1927, the introduction of wide-screens and stereophonic sound, after the end of World War II, and other technical innovations in the 1950s, there was a pattern of renovation among Iowa Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses. Common changes included adding a partition wall below the balcony to create a secondary foyer at the rear of the auditorium; adding a concession stand to the lobby; modernizing the interior of the auditorium and/or lobby; installing a new marquee; and enclosing the recessed entrance with glass doors and panels, which involved redesigning the theater entrance. Many of these changes adapted elements of the popular Art Deco or streamlined Art Moderne architectural styles, or, by the 1950s, adaptations of the American post-war International Style. One exception to renovation was the nineteenth and early twentieth century second floor Opera House Movie Theater due, in part, to the laws requiring public assembly spaces be on the ground floor.

Significance

Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses have important associations to the historic context outlined in Section E of this Multiple Property Documentation Form for their significance

under National Register Criteria A and/or B for the areas of ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION, PERFORMING ARTS, COMMERCE, ETHNIC HERITAGE, and SOCIAL HISTORY. In addition to their associations with the commercial contexts of the historic context "Historical Development of Iowa Movie Theaters 1880-1975" as outlined in the Introduction,[7] they have direct associations with the following subcontexts: "Rise of the Motion Picture: 1900 – 1930,"[8] "State-Wide Impact of the Era of Centralization and Domination of Movie Theater Chains, 1920 – 1948,"[9] "Movie Theater Development in the Great Depression and the War Years: 1930 – 1946,"[10] and "Iowa Movie Theaters in the Post-World War II Period and Era of Suburbanization: 1946 – 1975,"[11] They reflect the evolution of popular entertainment and advances in moving picture technology.

Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses may also be significant under Criterion C for ARCHITECTURE for important associations with the historic subcontext, "Evolution of Movie Theater Design, 1900 – 1975."[12] Their pattern of features common to the class of Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses erected between 1915 and 1960, the individuality or variations of features that occurred within that class, the evolution of that class and the transition between the Community Halls and Conversion Movie Theaters to the purpose-built movie theater. The significance of this property type is for its local associations and therefore, its contribution to its particular community, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Criterion A-1 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses that illustrate the initial development of small-to-moderate sized (up to 1000 seat) purpose-built movie theaters located in downtown commercial areas of cities and towns and in neighborhood commercial nodes along public transportation routes.

Criterion A-2 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses that are part of clusters, corridors, or districts that illustrate the patterns of residential and commercial development of a community.

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[7] Ibid., E-1.
[8] Ibid., E-17.
[9] Ibid., E-51.
[10] Ibid., E-59.
[11] Ibid., E-64.
[12] Ibid., E-73.

Criterion A-3 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses associated with periods of commercial growth within a community.

Criterion A-4 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses that were the only venue for commercial exhibition of moving pictures in a community or neighborhood commercial center and thus attracted not only local patrons, but also those from the surrounding area; stimulating the expenditure of discretionary funds by the public and generating jobs, expenditures for supplies and services, and local and state revenues.

Criterion A-5 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses that introduced new commercial practices or technological features such as concession stands, talking pictures, 3-D movies, and wide-screens, to a locality.

Criterion A-6 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses that reflect stratification or segregation and/or integration of religious, racial, economic, and other social groups through the building's commercial character, management policies, and/or location.

Criterion B-1 A Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie House that has a singular, significant association with a person whose individual success, talent, and/or ingenuity contributed to the historic development of motion picture exhibition in the community, state, or nation.

Criterion B-2 A Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie House that is individually and singularly recognized for the ownership and contributions of one family over a long period of time to the exhibition of movies when such accomplishments of one or more family members is exceptional in the community, state, or nation.

Criterion B-3 A Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie House that is individually and singularly recognized for the contribution an owner/exhibitor who played an important political or legal role in the exhibition of movies in the community, state or nation.

Criterion C-1 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses that introduced or illustrate technological achievements in the exhibition of motion pictures.

Criterion C-2 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses that reflect changes in form, plan, and design of the building type in response to health and safety trends and/or specific regulations.

Criterion C-3 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses whose size and stylistic treatment reflect definite periods in the development of the property type specifically, and of commercial movie theaters in general.

Criterion C-4 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses that illustrate expressions of architectural styles and vernacular adaptations thereof that are rare, notable, or influential to the aesthetic development of a community's commercial districts.

Criterion C-5 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses that introduce the use of notable, or new materials.

Criterion C-6 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses that are the notable work of skilled architects noted for their work in movie theater design.

Criterion C-7 Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses that include notable work of craftsmen and artists.

Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for listing under Criterion A, Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses must have functioned for a finite period of time between circa 1915 and circa 1960 as a commercial public venue for the exhibition of motion pictures. The Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses is a small- or medium-sized purpose-built theater seating less than 1000 and located in either a downtown commercial area or along electric streetcar and bus routes in larger towns and cities.

To qualify for listing under Criterion B, Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses must have a significant association with a person or one family over a long period of time who made a singular or exceptional contribution within a defined historic context to the commercial exhibition of motion pictures. Mere ownership or commercial association with a Commercial Block Downtown and

Neighborhood Movie House in conjunction with the exhibition of motion pictures is not sufficient for listing under this Criterion; the association with this property type must directly involve the Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie House during the person's productive life when the significant accomplishment occurred. The Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses nominated for associations with an important individual or one family over a long period of time should be compared to other associated properties to identify that which best represents the individual's (or family's) specific historic contribution to the exhibition of motion pictures.

To qualify for listing under Criterion C, Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses must reflect the defining architectural characteristics, including interior and exterior architectural features, finishes, plan, and construction practices, as defined in the description section for this property sub-type. In particular, the Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses must reflect the technological advancements, materials, and architectural and structural changes associated with its period of construction and/or significance as well as custom designed features specific to exhibition of motion pictures and in providing a safe venue for the exhibition of movies. Moreover, the Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses must also reflect aesthetic, stylistic and design treatments specific to the period of significance.

Historic Architectural Integrity

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the physical characteristics and architectural qualities in the description section of this property type must be sufficiently illustrated and the property must retain sufficient quality of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship, to convey feelings of the Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses' period of significance and associations with the aforementioned areas of significance under National Register Criteria A, B, and/or C in this section. Generally, this requires that eligible Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses must retain historic integrity of their period of significance.

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the characteristics and qualities described above must remain intact and retain integrity to support the significance of the building within identified associated historic contexts. Generally, this requires that the Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie House retain the architectural composition, ornamental details, and materials of its original primary exterior elevation and of its interior theater elements. Due to the age of some of these buildings and their continued use, a certain degree of deterioration and loss is to be expected. Reversible alterations, such as the loss or removal of ornamental detailing, replacement of doors, window sashes and

framing elements, and scarring of architectural elements, are common and do not necessarily diminish a building's contribution to the historic contexts. In particular, loss of original window sashes and exterior doors is not unusual. Because of the identified time periods where renovation was common in response to technological or other significant changes in patterns of development affecting movie exhibition, many of this property type may have periods of significance that do not coincide with the construction date or earlier periods of use. For alterations to achieve significance over time, as is allowed in National Register guidelines, the alterations should be limited to a specific renovation which occurred due to significant national patterns of technological changes or periods of stylistic change. Even a total renovation to create the appearance of a more modern era that has associations with significant patterns of stylistic change or technological innovation may have achieved significance over time.

Generally, this requires that a Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie House retain the architectural composition, ornamental details, and materials of either its original primary exterior elevation and of its interior theater elements or those of a significant or holistic renovation associated with its period of significance. Thus, because movie theaters were especially prone to updating of their appearance, exterior, and interior modifications that reflect the continued use of the theater can be considered historic if they were completed during a specific period of significance. Due to the age of these buildings and their continued use, a certain degree of deterioration and loss is to be expected. Reversible alterations, such as the loss or removal of ornamental detailing, replacement of doors, window sashes and framing elements, and scarring of architectural elements are common and do not necessarily diminish a building's contribution to the historic contexts. In particular, loss of original window sashes and exterior doors and changes in entry door system storefronts is not unusual.

Most importantly, the form of the vestibule and/or lobby, auditorium, stage and proscenium (if present), and balcony (if present) during the period of significance must remain unaltered. These features communicate the unique feeling of the theater as a distinct space. Other elements that distinctly communicate the historic function of the movie theater might include the marquee and entrance, the projection booth, associated owner apartments, rear or side exit doors, the concession stand, and lounges or other secondary spaces. Both the interior and the exterior of the building must retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship to communicate its feelings and associations with its historic function and period of significance.

While the exterior integrity of the movie theater is essential for listing in the National Register, the Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie House can only be nominated for its

significance under this Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) if the historic configuration of the auditorium, and lobby and other interrelated progressive public spaces remain intact. For a building to be listed under Criteria A, B, and/or C.

- the building's openings on the primary façade during the period of significance should be unaltered or have minor alterations in a sensitive and appropriate manner, using similar materials, profiles, and sizes as the original building elements;
- the exterior materials utilized during the period of significance should remain intact and exposed;
- significant, character-defining decorative elements present during the period of significance should be intact;
- design elements intrinsic to the building's style and plan during the period of significance should be intact; and
- the overall feeling or character of the building for the time period in which it was significant for the commercial exhibition of movies should be intact.

If these elements no longer retain their historic integrity, the building may not be listed utilizing this MPDF. However, the building may still be eligible for listing in the National Register as a contributing element to a historic district under another context, such as an example of historic commercial architecture in its community; or associations with historic trends in commerce or community planning and development.

MOVIE PALACES

Description

The Movie Palace represented the apex of movie theater design. It is a unique building type strongly influenced by the design of the opera houses and music halls built in Europe and the United States during the late nineteenth century. While they share the same essential form and configuration of spaces with the Opera House movie theater and the Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie House property types, the Movie Palace property type is distinguished by its unique, exotic architecture and large size. Built in medium-to-large cities in Iowa, between World War I and 1941, the onset of World War II, Movie Palaces were the largest and grandest motion picture theaters in the state. Those erected in Iowa were architect-designed and, in particular, reflected the work of the Des Moines architectural firm of

Wetherell and Harrison or the work of a nationally recognized firm, such as the Chicago firm of Rapp and Rapp.

The important styles that influenced the design of Movie Palaces in Iowa in the early years of the twentieth century included Beaux Arts, Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, and Renaissance Revival (1914-1920); and Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival (1914-1940). Because of the preponderance of revival styles drawing from similar European antecedents, and their eclectic adaptation for the high-style Movie Palace genre, it is sometimes difficult to affix any one particular stylistic terminology, as very few were truly designed and executed in one academic style.

All were heavily ornamented or highly stylistic designs that often featured whimsical, exotic imagery or dramatic design. Their size and high style or fanciful exterior façades distinguished them from and dominated the surrounding commercial streetscape. Electric lights on large marquees and vertical blade signs presented the name of the theater. Aesthetically, the marquee design often worked separately from the design of the primary façade. The interior of the Movie Palace featured extravagant architectural elements and/or academic/high style interior decoration. Multi-level balconies, grand staircases, and highly ornamented or stylized surfaces often followed neoclassical, exotic ethnic architectural themes, or Modern Movement style idioms. Movie Palaces featured ancillary spaces, such as lounges, smoking rooms, cry rooms, and play rooms. Because early Movie Palaces were typically designed and equipped for live performances as well as motion pictures, they also accommodate dressing rooms, basement animal cages, rigging and lighting, and often, a fly loft. An organ sat in the orchestra pit and ornamental side walls camouflaged the pipes

Atmospheric Theaters

A sub-type of the state's early Movie Palaces is the Atmospheric Theater, which featured an auditorium ceiling designed to give the illusion of an open sky. Walls created the sense of place, often composed of building facades or tropical gardens; they conveyed an impression of being seated at night in an exotic foreign setting, such as a European palace or village square, a garden or an outdoor amphitheater. Special effects in lighting and elevated projectors created stars, comets, clouds, and other celestial effects.

Modern Movement Style Movie Palaces

Movie Palaces erected during the Great Depression shifted from the Revival Styles to exuberant Modern Movement Art Deco facades. The Art Deco style originated in Europe and gained popularity in America in the late 1920s. Classified as a sub-type of the American Modern Movement style, its design repudiated

classical and revival styles and embraced artistic expression that complemented the modern machine age. By the end of the 1920s, both high style and restrained versions of the Art Deco style quickly appeared in commercial buildings on the "Main Streets" of Iowa. The Movie Palaces erected in the 1930s in Iowa featured geometric forms and vertical massing and ornamentation. Vertical planes spaced at regular intervals extended the full height of the façade, creating a distinct vertical emphasis. Ornamentation included striated and abstract details that embellished wall surfaces.

As the sobering realities of the Great Depression set in, the high style Art Deco building seemed flamboyant (and relatively expensive). New movie theater designs inspired by the more simpler Art Moderne (Moderne) style that had their origins in the early Modern Movement style in America and evolved after World War II were modern, more restrained hybrid emphasizing horizontality, featured a flat roof, smooth, and rounded wall surfaces; an asymmetrical façade often ornamented with horizontal bands or lines; arrangements of horizontal windows, casement/corner windows, and glass block windows (often curved); and metal balustrades. Few Movie Palaces of this style were erected in in Iowa cities.

Movie Palaces executed in variations of the Modern Movement style often employed large expanses of colored glass panels, and chrome, and stainless steel trim. Unlike earlier Movie Palaces, these Movie Palaces did not present theatrical acts and confined live performances to restrained variety acts. The orchestra pit disappeared in some, as they were all wired for sound.

Significance

Movie Palaces are significant to the historic context outlined in Section E of this Multiple Property Documentation Form for their significance under Criterion C for the area of ARCHITECTURE and are primarily eligible for listing in the National Register for their architectural design. Movie Palaces are also significant under Criteria A and/or B in the areas of ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION, PERFORMING ARTS, ETHNIC HERITAGE, and COMMERCE for their illustration of the evolution of the movie industry and the development of movie studio dominance through ownership of Movie Palaces to control distribution of movies. In addition to their associations with the commercial themes of the historic context "Historical Development of Iowa Movie Theaters 1880-1975" as outlined in the Introduction,[13] they have direct associations with the following subcontexts developed in Section E as part of this MPDF: "Rise of the Motion Picture: 1900 – 1930," "State-wide Impact of the Era of Centralization and Domination of Movie Theater Chains, 1920 – 1948," and "Movie Theater

[13] Ibid., E-1.

Development in the Great Depression and the War Years: 1930 – 1946,"[14] Movie Palaces may be significant for their local, state, or national associations and include, but are not limited to the following areas of significance:

Criterion A-1 Movie Palaces that illustrate the initial development of property type in the state or in the nation.

Criterion A-2 Movie Palaces that reflect economic forces associated with the development of studio movie chains and distribution of films.

Criterion A-3 Movie Palaces associated with periods of commercial growth within a community.

Criterion A-4 Movie Palaces that were the initial and only venue for commercial exhibition of first-run moving pictures in a community and thus attracted not only local patrons, but also those from the surrounding area; stimulating the expenditure of discretionary funds by the public and generating jobs, expenditures for supplies and services, and local and state revenues.

Criterion A-5 Movie Palaces that introduced new commercial practices and/or technological features such as concession stands and talking pictures.

Criterion A-6 Movie Palaces that reflect the stratification or segregation and/or integration of religious, racial, economic, and other social groups through the building's management policies.

Criterion B-1 A Movie Palace that has a singular, significant association with a person whose individual success, talent, and/or ingenuity contributed to the historic development of motion picture exhibition in the community, state, or nation.

Criterion B-2 A Movie Palace that is individually and singularly recognized for the ownership and contributions of one family over a long period of time to the exhibition of movies when such accomplishments of one or more family members is exceptional in the community, state, or nation

[14] Ibid., E-17, E-51, E-59

Criterion B-3 A Movie Palace that is individually and singularly recognized for the contribution of an owner/exhibitor who played an important political or legal role in the exhibition of movies in the community, state or nation.

Criterion C-1 Movie Palaces that introduced or illustrate technological achievements in the exhibition of moving pictures.

Criterion C-2 Movie Palaces that reflect changes in form, plan, and design of the property type in response to health and safety trends and/or specific regulations.

Criterion C-3 Movie Palaces that illustrate variations of the property type such as Atmospheric Theaters.

Criterion C-4 Movie Palaces whose size and stylistic treatment reflects definite periods in the development of the property type.

Criterion C-5 Movie Palaces that illustrate expressions of architectural styles that are rare, notable, or influential to the aesthetic development the property type.

Criterion C-6 Movie Palaces that illustrate the use of rare or notable materials.

Criterion C-7 Movie Palaces that are the notable work of skilled architects noted for their work in movie theater design.

Criterion C-8 Movie Palaces that include notable work of craftsmen and artists.

Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for listing under Criterion A, Movie Palaces must have functioned for a finite period time during beginning around World War I and extending to the U.S. entry into World War II as a commercial public exhibition venue for motion pictures. Movie Palaces must have been built specifically for exhibition of moving pictures, but can be listed when live performances played an auxiliary role to the exhibition of motion pictures, in particular the feature-length film. The Movie Palace property type must be a medium- to large-size facility that features dramatic architectural styling through heavily ornamented or highly stylistic designs that distinguish them from the surrounding commercial streetscapes.

To qualify for listing under Criterion B, Movie Palaces must have a significant association with a person who made a singular contribution within a defined historic context to the commercial exhibition of motion pictures. Mere ownership or commercial association with a Movie Palace is not sufficient for listing under this Criterion; the association with this property type must directly involve a given Movie Palace during the person's productive life when the significant accomplishment occurred. The Movie Palace nominated for associations with an important individual should be compared to other associated properties to identify that which best represents the individual's specific historic contribution to the exhibition of motion pictures.

To qualify for listing under Criterion C, a Movie Palaces must reflect the defining architectural characteristics, including interior and exterior architectural features, treatments, and construction practices during its period of significance and as defined in the description section for this property sub-type. In particular, the Movie Palace must reflect the technological advancements and architectural and structural changes related to its period of significance. Moreover, because of the importance of the architectural design, plan, and finishes in defining the property type, Movie Palaces must also reflect aesthetic, stylistic and design treatments specific to the period in which motion pictures were exhibited in this venue.

Historic Architectural Integrity

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the physical characteristics and architectural qualities in the description section of this property type must be sufficiently illustrated and the property must retain sufficient quality of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship, to convey feelings of the Movie Palace's period of significance and associations with the aforementioned areas of significance under National Register Criteria A, B, and/or C in this section

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the characteristics and qualities described for this property sub-type and in the associated historical contexts in Section E must remain sufficiently intact and retain a sufficient quality of historic architectural integrity to support the significance of the building within these historic contexts, specifically those contexts associated with architectural significance. Integrity of the interior and exterior design, materials, and workmanship that convey the Movie Palace's design theme, historic appearance, and function are critical to maintaining the historic feeling and associations of the property type. In addition, the public spaces of the vestibules, lobby, passages, staircases, auditorium, stage, proscenium, and balcony must remain unaltered. These features communicate the unique feelings of the theater's distinctive spatial relationships. Other elements

that communicate the historic function of Movie Palaces include the marquee and, in certain instances, the arrangement of secondary spaces. Changes over a period of time which are easily reversible such as color of interior walls and ceilings, fabrics, replacement seating should be sympathetic and compatible to the design during the period of significance.

Although renovations to the Opera House or the Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie House property types may be considered contributing to the significance of the property, especially when they reflect a continuation of the original function, the same is not true of the Movie Palace. The period of significance for an Iowa Movie Palace is limited to the years between its date of construction and prior to the onset of World War II. These years include the era of renovations associated with the advent of sound in motion picture exhibition and end with the period when construction of Movie Palaces ceased in Iowa. Even if renovations occurred more than fifty years ago and the theater remained in continuous use, renovations that altered the historic architectural features and décor finishes associated with its period of construction and the property type's period of significance will render the theater ineligible for listing in the National Register as a Movie Palace.

In addition to the constraints on the interior architectural spaces, elements, and finishes as noted above, the exterior integrity of the movie theater is equally essential for listing in the National Register. In this regard the Movie Palace must be nominated under Criterion C and may also be listed under Criteria A and/or B under the following conditions:

- the building's openings on the primary façade(s) should be unaltered or have only minor alterations in a sensitive and appropriate manner, using similar materials, profiles, and sizes as the original building elements;
- the original exterior materials should remain intact and exposed;
- significant, character-defining decorative exterior elements present during the period of significance should be intact;
- design elements intrinsic to the building's style and plan during the period of significance should be intact; and
- the overall feeling or character of the building for the time period in which it was erected through the onset of World War II should be intact.

DRIVE-IN THEATERS

Description

A Drive-in Theater is an outdoor theater consisting of a large screen and supporting structure, a projection booth, a concession stand, a large parking area for automobiles. Within a defined area, customers viewed movies from the privacy and comfort of their cars. The screen of the historic Drive-in Theater built between 1947 and 1975 in Iowa was as simple as a masonry wall painted white or as complex as steel truss structures with an attached all-weather screen. Parking for cars (and airplanes) occurred in designated rows horizontal to the screen. Speaker stands designated the individual parking spaces (ramps) graded to slightly raise the front of the car for better viewing. Originally, large speakers mounted on the screen provided the movie sound track. Soon, theater owners switched to wired individual speakers with volume control connected by a cable buried underground. The speaker could be removed from its stand and attached to a window of the left side of the car. Even later, a more economical and less damage-prone method broadcast the soundtrack at a low-output power on AM or FM Radio to be picked up by the car radio.

The Drive-in Theater site was a flat piece of land with good drainage or a graded sloped site easily assessable and viewable from a well-travelled highway. Other site considerations were locations within convenient driving distance of a population center. A 500-car theater required about ten acres to accommodate not only the amphitheater parking area but also ramps, driveways, screen, ticket booth, concession stand, playgrounds, landscaping, and a buffer area from other commercial encroachment, particularly the highway side. Landscaping was essential and one of the few items that set the tone for the entrance and public areas as well as defining the boundaries of the various spaces. It featured an informal plan using local and native plantings to assure growth and low maintenance. A hundred car spaces was the absolute minimum number required to operate a profitable business. Iowa's historic Drive-in Theaters ranged from about 280 to 700 spaces.

Screen size was from 40-to-140 feet wide. Their shape varied from vertical flat, to sloped, to a sloped-concave form. The advantages of the sloped-concave screen were the reduction of distortion and a brighter picture. The large screens presented structural issues as the top of a large screen was approximately 75 feet off the ground and easily damaged by windstorms. Thus, the most economical

approach was keeping the screen structure separate and at a safe distance from other buildings. The rear of the screen and a large, self-standing blade marquee sign provided advertising and easy identification of the entrance drive. This marketing advantage, as well as prevailing winds, often determined the choice of the site and/or the location of the screen.

The box office location in relation to the highway allowed for a line of from 100 to 200 cars on the drive in front of the booth to avoid blocking the public right-of-way. The box office was small and utilitarian with a window for taking admissions and a rear door for egress. They were one-story wood frame, concrete block (CMU), or prefabricated metal enclosures. Lights, located low to the ground, lined the driveway. Concession/restroom buildings and projection booths were as low as possible to avoid obstructing the view from cars behind the buildings.This resulted in thin roofs and wood frame or concrete block (CMU) construction. The roof elevation generally conformed to the sightlines of the parking ramp immediately behind it. This posed specific design problems because the projectors and projector lamps were the largest and most powerful manufactured, and thus blocked the view of the screen from behind. Another variation was to leave an open space behind these buildings to utilize the advantage of height for projection booths without blocking the view of the parking space behind.

In the era of the twin theater in the 1970s, twin theater design often placed the theaters at opposite ends of the large amphitheater area and concentrated a common box office and theater concession and projection booths located in the middle of the site. This allowed two things: a common drive that split at the box office to access the theater of choice, and the two-story combination back-to-back concession stands and bathrooms on the ground floor and combined projection booth space above.

Significance

Drive-in Theaters are significant to the historic context outlined in Section E of this Multiple Property Documentation Form for their significance under National Register Criteria A and/or B for the areas of ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION, PERFORMING ARTS, COMMERCE, ETHNIC HERITAGE, and SOCIAL HISTORY. In particular, they have direct associations with the subcontexts, ”Movie Theaters in the Post-World War II Period and Era of Suburbanization: 1946 – 1975”[15] and “Evolution of Movie Theater Design, 1900 – 1975.”[16] A Drive-in Theater may also be significant as a historic district under

[15] Ibid, E-64.
[16] Ibid, E-73.

Criterion C for ARCHITECTURE for their pattern of features common to the class of Drive-in Theaters erected in Iowa between 1947 and 1975, the individuality or variations of features that occurred within that class, and the evolution of the Drive-in Theater property type.

Drive-in Theaters reflect the evolution of popular entertainment and advances in moving picture technology after World War II. Initially the Drive-in Theater was a simple response to post-war shortages in construction materials and a growing public demand for entertainment venues away from the central city. More importantly, however, the Drive-in Theater is a reflection of a radical change in middle-class culture that occurred in the mid-twentieth century. It reflects the growing auto-centric nature of the post-World War II period and a twenty-year era of diffusion of a significant segment of the population to expanding suburban areas. Drive-in movie theaters have associations with the nature of suburban development and the daily life of the predominately white, middle-class family built around the automobile that enabled them to choose where and when to seek out entertainment. Drive-in Theaters have a direct relationship with not only the proliferation of automobiles, but with the economic affluence this increase reflected. They are part of an affluent leisure culture that began in the 1950s and continued into the early 1970s. They also reflect the more informal lifestyle of suburbia, where dressing up for downtown movies was quite different than wearing informal clothing to the Drive-in. The two-car family and the affluence it represented came at a time when teenage years became extended by more educational opportunities and the consequent delay in engaging in adult work caused teens to seek independence and privacy outside the home, in an era when the roles and culture of the pre-war family changed dramatically.[17]

The significance of this property type is for its local associates and therefore, its contribution to its particular community, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Criterion A-1 Drive-in Theaters that illustrate the initial development of the property type along public transportation routes in developing suburban areas in the post World War II era (1947-1960).

Criterion A-2 Drive-in Theaters that are part of clusters, corridors, or byways that illustrate the suburban patterns of development and the growth of interstate highways.

Criterion A-3 Drive-in Theaters associated with suburban growth patterns.

[17] Don and Susan Sanders, *The American Drive-In Movie* (St. Paul MN: Motor Books, MBI Publishing Company, 2003), 9-12.

Criterion A-4 Early Drive-in Theaters that, by virtue of their location and facilities, attracted not only local patrons, but also those from the surrounding area; stimulating the expenditure of discretionary funds by the public and generating jobs, expenditures for supplies and services, and local and state revenues.

Criterion A-5 Drive-in Theaters that introduced new commercial practices and/or technological features to a locality.

Criterion A-6 Drive-in Theaters that reflect the stratification or segregation and/or integration of religious, racial, economic, and other social groups through design, management policies, and/or location.

Criterion B-1 A Drive-in Theater that has a singular, significant association with a person whose individual success, talent, and/or ingenuity contributed to the historic development of motion picture exhibition in the community, state, or nation.

Criterion B-2 A Drive-in Theater that is individually and singularly recognized for the ownership and contributions of one family over a long period of time to the exhibition of movies when such accomplishments of one or more family members is exceptional in the community, state, or nation

Criterion B-3 A Drive-in Theater that is individually and singularly recognized for the contribution an owner/exhibitor who played an important political or legal role in the exhibition of movies in the community, state or nation.

Criterion C-1 Drive-in Theaters that introduced or illustrate technological achievements in exhibition of motion pictures.

Criterion C-2 Drive-in Theaters that reflect changes in form, plan, and design of buildings, structures and sites in response to safety trends and/or specific regulations.

Criterion C-3 Drive-in Theaters whose size and stylistic treatment reflect definite periods in the development of the property type.

Criterion C-4 Drive-in Theaters that illustrate expressions of architectural styles, graphic arts, and modern structural systems that is rare, notable, and/or influential to the design development of the property type.

Criterion C-5 Drive-in Theaters that are the work of skilled architects and/or engineers, particularly those noted for their work in relation to movie theater design.

Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for listing under Criterion A, Drive-in Theaters must have functioned for a finite period of time after 1947 as a commercial public venue for the exhibition of motion pictures. The Drive-in Theater must be nominated as a district.

To qualify for listing under Criterion B, Drive-in Theaters must have a significant association with a person or one family over a long period of time who made a singular or exceptional contribution within a defined historic context to the commercial exhibition of motion pictures. Mere ownership or commercial association with a Drive-in Theater in conjunction with the exhibition of motion pictures is not sufficient for listing under this Criterion; the association with this property type must directly involve the Drive-in Theater during the person's productive life when the significant accomplishment occurred. The Drive-in Theaters nominated for associations with an important individual or one family over a long period of time should be compared to other associated properties to identify that which best represents the individual's (or family's) specific historic contribution to the exhibition of motion pictures.

To qualify for listing under Criterion C, Drive-in Theaters must reflect the defining architectural characteristics, including key structures and architectural features, landscape elements, plan, and construction practices, as defined in the description section for this property sub-type. In particular, Drive-in Theaters must reflect the technological advancements, materials, and architectural and structural designs associated with its period of construction and/or significance. Moreover, Drive-in Theaters must also reflect aesthetic, stylistic and design treatments specific to the period of significance.

Historic Architectural Integrity

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the physical characteristics and architectural qualities in the description section of this property type must be sufficiently illustrated and the property must retain sufficient quality of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and

workmanship, to convey feelings of the Drive-in Theater's period of significance and associations with the aforementioned areas of significance under National Register Criteria A, B, and/or C in this section.

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the characteristics and qualities described above must remain intact and retain a sufficient quality of integrity to support the significance of the Drive-in Theater historic district within the identified associated historic contexts in Section E. Generally, this requires that the Drive-in Theater district retain integrity as a whole, with the majority of the original components that make up the district's historic character possessing historic/architectural integrity even if they are individually undistinguished. In addition, the relationships among components of Drive-in Theater districts must remain substantially unchanged since the period of significance.

One exception relates to the movie screen. Because of the age of this property type and the common upgrading of the screen and the replacement of damaged or destroyed movie screens over time, the integrity of the district as a whole is not necessarily damaged by the replacement of the screen at the same or close location, or the loss of the screen but the retention of a structure that supported a movie screen at the location of the original screen. In these cases, the entirety of the integrity of other structural and architectural elements, landscape elements, and their spatial relationships must be evaluated for their cumulative impact with consideration of the impact of the loss of the screen from the period of significance and nature of the replacement screen structure.

Furthermore, in evaluating the cumulative integrity of the Drive-in Theater historic district, evaluation of integrity should take into consideration the relative number, size, scale, design, and location of the components integral to the commercial exhibition of movies as well as the entire viewing experience that was unique to attending the Drive-in Theater during its period of significance.

Due to the age and the common abandonment of Drive-in Theaters in Iowa, as well as their continued use over an extended time period, a certain degree of change or deterioration and loss is to be expected. Reversible alterations, such as the loss or removal of ornamental detailing, replacement of doors, window sashes and framing elements do not necessarily diminish a building's contribution to a Drive-in Theater's historic contexts. In particular, loss of original window sashes and exterior doors of the concession stand/restrooms and/or projection booths as well as the loss of small box offices, playground equipment, and speaker stands is not unusual. However, a Drive-in Theater is not eligible for listing in the National Register if it contains so many alterations, losses, or new intrusions that it no longer conveys its historic character. With the exceptions noted above relating to the movie screen and its structure, a component of

the Drive-in Theater district cannot contribute to its significance if it has been substantially altered since the period of the district's significance or if it does not share the historic associations of the district.

MULTIPLEX THEATERS

Description

There are three types of Multiplex Theaters that appeared in the 1960s and early 1970s. The earliest were small purpose-built movie theaters constructed in a shopping mall. About the same time, the creation of twin theaters quickly moved into Movie Palaces and large Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses where movie attendance was declining and smaller sub-divided spaces proved to generate more revenue. Even the Main Street movie house in smaller cities and towns, received some version of what became known as twinning. The final iteration of the Multiplex Theater in Iowa was the self-standing theater complex located near major highways and shopping centers with, by the mid-1970s, from three to four theaters.

By 1963, most of the theaters that opened were small single screen theaters built in shopping centers.[18] By the end of the decade, twin theaters in shopping malls became the latest in the evolution of movie theaters. The mall theater presented a sleek modern and homogenous image on the outside and inside. They featured one reception lobby viewable from the mall concourse through floor-to-ceiling glass doors and panels, or open space enclosed by metal gates when closed. The lobby included a central enclosed or open ticket counter, flanking adjacent ticket-taker boxes set back slightly from the box office counter into the lobby with roping separating box office activities from the rest of the lobby space. A massive central concession stand dominated the lobby. Flanking the concession stand were double-leaf solid wood doors through which the patron entered directly into the back of the theater auditorium. Depending on the size of the auditorium, the seating plan featured a wide passageway at the back of the theater accessing side aisles and a center aisle, a center aisle, or a center section with side aisles, all on a raked floor. There were no balconies. The screen was flush with the front wall of the auditorium, lacking a stage or proscenium.

The decoration of the lobby space reflected the modern family room of the period: paneled wood walls, a modern chandelier, carpeting and full-length windows looking out on the shopping center or, if a self-standing building, the surface parking lot. The viewing experience continued the family room aesthetic;

[18] There are not sufficient numbers of extant single-screen theaters in malls identified in state-wide survey to comprise a definable property type.

comfortable chairs, expanded legroom and a restful environment served as a prelude to immersion in the viewing experience. Some of the theaters built in the 1970s featured stadium seating, which consisted of sharply raked rows of seats extending from in front of the screen back towards the ceiling, providing patrons with a clear sight line over the heads of those seated in front of them.

The mall movie theater building was usually at the end or in the middle of the main concourse within a defined storefront or other spaces. Some featured flattened pseudo marquees with some sort of light display over the entrance. These general conditions continued after malls became enclosed as entrances to the malls were at the ends and middle sections. Whether located in a mall or erected as a separate self-contained building, early Multiplexes all shared a single foyer area incorporating the box office space, concession stand and restroom facilities. All featured modern architectural styling consistent with the basic features of the International style as applied to retail establishments. Those that were housed independently as Multiplex movie buildings featured pole signage located near the highway, delineating the entrance to the parking lot.

Significance

Multiplex Theaters are significant to the historic context outlined in Section E of this Multiple Property Documentation Form for their significance under National Register Criteria A and/or B for the areas of ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION, PERFORMING ARTS, COMMERCE, ETHNIC HERITAGE and SOCIAL HISTORY. In particular, they have direct associations with the following historic subcontexts "Movie Theaters in the Post-World War II Period and Era of Suburbanization: 1946 – 1975," and "Evolution of Movie Theater Design, 1900 – 1975."[19] They reflect the evolution of popular entertainment and advances in moving picture technology. A movie theater may also be significant under Criterion C for ARCHITECTURE for their pattern of features common to the class of Multiplex Theaters erected between circa 1965 and 1975, the individuality or variations of features that occurred within that class, and the evolution of that class.

During the period of development of the Multiplex Theater, the federal government vacated the requirements for studio divesture of theater ownership and major movie studios once again invested in movie theaters. The era, however, is noteworthy, for changes that diluted the old studio distribution system. The Multiplex Theater ushered in a new type and a new era in commercial exhibition of films. With multiple theaters showing films continuously, concession stand offerings expanded and generated a

[19] Schwenk, E-64, and E-73.

significant profit. Technology caught up with film distribution. The presence of multi-screen venues at the same location showing movies throughout the day resulted in the same theaters receiving by mail the same film prints shipped to thousands of theaters throughout the country simultaneously. Multiplex Theaters in essence, obliterated the hierarchy of first- and second-run movie theaters.

Beginning in the 1970s, movie theaters in Iowa enjoyed a renaissance, a building boom reminiscent of the 1920s. The profits, popularity, accessibility, and associations with shopping and eating venues, is significant. This combination ended the domination of the small town and urban neighborhood local theaters, which did not survive the competition from the Multiplex Theater construction boom of the 1970s. By the mid-70s it was apparent that the movie theater's historical visual and cultural connection to its patrons' neighborhood and community was over.

Another area of significance relates to the passage of the public accommodation laws in 1964. As part of this civil rights legislation, segregation within movie theaters and among theaters legally ended. While minority populations were not initially a significant population in suburban neighborhoods, the location of movie theaters within public shopping malls and along highway corridors served to open these venues to increasing numbers of people of color. The significance of this property type is for its local significance and therefore, its contribution to its particular community, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Criterion A-1 Multiplex Theaters that illustrate the initial development of small, multi-screen theaters in suburban malls and near suburban shopping centers and "big box" retail stores in expanding suburban enclaves and along major interstate highways.

Criterion A-2 that are part of clusters, corridors, or districts that illustrate the patterns of development of a community or suburban enclave.

Criterion A-3 Multiplex Theaters that introduced new commercial practices and/or technological features such as concession stands and talking pictures.

Criterion A-4 Multiplex Theaters associated with important suburban growth patterns. .

Criterion A-5 Early Multiplex Theaters that, by virtue of their location and facilities attracted not only local patrons, but also those from the surrounding area; stimulating the expenditure of discretionary funds by the public and generating jobs, expenditures for supplies and services, and local and state revenues.

Criterion A-5 Multiplex Theaters that served as anchor tenants in the business plan of suburban malls.

Criterion A-6 Multiplex Theaters that reflect the stratification or segregation and/or integration of religious, racial, economic, and other groups through the building's design of separate spaces for racial groups, management policies, and/or location.

Criterion B-1 A Multiplex Theater that has a singular, significant association with a person whose individual success, talent, and/or ingenuity contributed to the historic development of motion picture exhibition in the community, state, or nation.

Criterion B-2 A Multiplex Theater that is individually and singularly recognized for the ownership and contributions of one family over a long period of time to the exhibition of movies when such accomplishments of one or more family members is exceptional in the community, state, or nation.

Criterion B-3 A Multiplex Theater that is individually and singularly recognized for the contribution of an owner/exhibitor who played an important political or legal role in the exhibition of movies in the community, state or nation.

Criterion C-1 Multiplex Theaters that introduced or illustrate technological achievements in the size of movie theater auditoria and exhibition of motion pictures.

Criterion C-2 Multiplex Theaters that reflect changes in form, plan, and design of the building type in response to significant health and safety codes.

Criterion C-3 Multiplex Theaters whose size and stylistic treatment reflect definite periods in the development of the property type specifically, and of commercial movie theaters in general.

Criterion C-4 Multiplex Theaters that illustrate expressions of architectural styles and adaptations thereof that are rare, notable, or influential to commercial architecture of a community, the state, or the nation.

Criterion C-5 Multiplex Theaters that illustrate the use of notable and/or significant new materials.

Criterion C-6 Multiplex Theaters that are the notable work of skilled architects noted for their work in movie theater design.

Registration Requirements

In order to qualify for listing under Criterion A, Multiplex Theaters must be fifty or more years in age, and date no earlier than c. 1965. They must be small purpose-built movie theaters constructed in a shopping mall or multiple theaters adapted from Movie Palaces and large Commercial Block Downtown and Neighborhood Movie Houses.

To qualify for listing under Criterion B, Multiplex Theaters must have a significant association with a person who made a singular contribution within a defined historic context to the commercial exhibition of motion pictures. Mere ownership or commercial association with a Multiplex Theaters in conjunction with the exhibition of motion pictures is not sufficient for listing under this Criterion; the association with this property type must directly involve the Multiplex Theaters during the person's productive life when the significant accomplishment occurred. The Multiplex Theaters nominated for associations with an important individual should be compared to other associated properties to identify that which best represents the individual's specific historic contribution to the exhibition of motion pictures.

To qualify for listing under Criterion C, Multiplexes must incorporate the pattern of features common to the class of Multiplex Theaters erected between circa 1965 and 1975, the individuality or variations of features that occurred within that class, and/or the evolution of that class. This includes the defining architectural characteristics, including interior and exterior architectural features, finishes, plan, and construction practices, as defined in the description section for this property sub-type. In particular, the Multiplex Theaters must reflect the technological advancements, materials, and architectural and structural changes associated with its period of construction and/or significance. Moreover, the Multiplex Theaters must also reflect aesthetic, stylistic and design treatments specific to the period of significance.

Historic Architectural Integrity

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the physical characteristics and architectural qualities in the description section of this property type must be sufficiently illustrated and

the property must retain sufficient quality of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship, to convey feelings of the Multiplex Theater's period of significance and associations with the aforementioned areas of significance under National Register Criteria A, B, and/or C in this section. Generally, this requires that eligible Multiplex Theaters retain historic integrity of their period of significance.

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the characteristics and qualities described above must remain intact and retain integrity to support the significance of the building within identified associated historic contexts. Generally, this requires that the Multiplex Theater retain the architectural composition, ornamental details, and materials of its original primary exterior elevations and/or of its interior theater elements. Due to the age and continued use of some of these theaters, a certain degree of deterioration and loss is to be expected. Because of state safety codes and some municipal lighting and signage codes, certain types of large historic signage mounted on pole and designed to be read from automobiles are no longer allowed along major corridors. Alterations, such as the in-kind replacement of doors, counters and storefront door systems and framing elements, and scarring of architectural elements are common and do not necessarily diminish a theater's contribution to the historic contexts. Moreover, replacement of carpeting and furnishings would not disqualify a theater from being listed in the National Register. However, because of the simplicity of design and interior treatment, the cumulative effect of alterations and the retention of the hierarchy of spaces, coordination of finishes of primary furnishings such as concessions stands and box office/ticket counters are particularly important. Alterations that have achieved significance over time under National Register guidelines should be limited to those associated with a holistic renovation which has associations with important national patterns relating to technological changes or with national periods of stylistic change that stimulated renovations that created the appearance of a more modern era. Changes associated with an individual owner's stylistic preferences that have no other associations with established historic movie theater design contexts nationally or in Iowa can be the basis for exclusion from the National Register.

The Multiplex Theater can only be nominated for its significance if the historic configuration of the auditorium, lobby, and other interrelated progressive public spaces remain intact. For a Multiplex Theater building to be listed under Criteria A, B, and/or C:

- the theater's exterior or interior storefront system, openings on the primary façade and other exterior treatments present during the period of significance should be unaltered or have minor

alterations in a sensitive and appropriate manner, using similar materials, profiles, and sizes as the original building elements;

- when integrated with a shopping center, the larger building complex should retain its architectural integrity from the period of significance of the Multiplex Theater;
- the exterior materials utilized during the period of significance should remain intact and exposed;
- significant, character-defining decorative elements present during the period of significance should be intact;
- design elements intrinsic to the theater's style and plan during the period of significance should be intact; and
- the overall feeling or character of the building for the time period in which it was significant for the commercial exhibition of movies should be intact.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

The State Historical Society of Iowa contracted with Sally Schwenk Associates, Inc., a Kansas City, Missouri, based cultural resource and preservation planning consultant to conduct additional cultural resource survey and to prepare a Multiple Property Documentation Form relating to historic movie theaters in Iowa. The scope-of-work focused on,

- contributing to the development of a comprehensive inventory of resources associated with commercially presented movies in the State of Iowa through the identification and intensive level survey of two hundred movie theaters throughout the state;

- developing a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) as a basis for evaluating the National Register eligibility of movie theaters in Iowa by establishing associated historic contexts and associated property types based on results from the proposed survey, and information yielded from previous survey and nominations to the National Register of Historic Places; and

- submitting with the MPDF at least one National Register nomination application for a movie theater as part of a Multiple Property Submission (MPS).

Sally Schwenk Associates, Inc. project staff included Sally Fullerton Schwenk, project director and historian responsible for research and development of the MPDF; Kerry Davis, architectural historian and survey coordinator, who conducted the field survey of one hundred resources and prepared the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Multiple Property Submission. Providing preplanning assistance and field investigation of an additional 100 theaters were Julie Arntson, architectural intern and Dana Cloud Gould, architect, of Susan Richards Johnson and Associates. Inc. Assisting Sally Schwenk were Stacy Wilson, research historian; and Heather Gilbride, administrative assistant in charge of data entry, legal description, UTM research and fact verification. Gilbride also coordinated the final editing, printing and assembly of the individual survey forms.

INTENSIVE LEVEL SURVEY GOALS

The primary goals of the survey portion of this project were to broaden the geographic representation of Iowa's National Register listed movie theaters through investigation and documentation of movie theaters in under-represented areas and farming communities, and to focus survey on documentation of movie theatres that have the potential to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The primary goal of the objective to develop a MPDF is to facilitate nominations to the National Register by establishing relevant historic contexts, typologies and registration requirements for these thematically based resources. Inherent to this mission was the literature search and review of previous survey, research, and National Register of Historic Places documentation of known theaters in Iowa as well as analysis of the information collected in field investigation of the two hundred movie theaters included in this project. The MPDF will allow further documentation of movie theater property types and sub-types allowing community-based planning to protect significant movie theater resources as well as to facilitate nominations when there is property owner support and/or funding for nominating movie theater properties to the National Register of Historic Places.

PRIORITIES

Priorities for this project include the intensive level survey of a minimum of two hundred movie theater buildings, structures, and/or sites built for or associated with commercially viewed movies erected in Iowa prior to 1975. This included converted buildings such as, opera houses, purpose-built movie theater buildings, multiplex theaters, drive-in movie structures, and building and sites as well as their related history and historic contexts.

Geographic areas of concern were underrepresented areas in the state's listings in the National Register of Historic Places, including small farming communities in Western Iowa and Northeast Iowa. This criteria and existing levels of previous documentation focused the research design on the development of state-wide historic contexts to identify and document the selected two hundred historic movie theatres.

SURVEY PLANNING

The staff of the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office of the State Historical Society of Iowa provided a preliminary list of over 250 theaters, as well as assembly of copies of all previous survey and National Register nominations. In addition, the staff provided assistance with development of a Microsoft Access database which could be merged with the state's central database.

In preparation for developing a final list, the consultant staff established initial priorities in developing the list of two hundred theaters to be surveyed, reviewed previous questionnaires sent by the SHPO staff in 2007, and created an initial e-mail questionnaire to be mailed to an identified constituency involving Certified Local Governments (CLGs), city and county planning directors, county clerks, and local and county historical groups. They then,

- identified and removed National Register-listed theaters from the potential survey list.
- per consultation with SHPO staff in May 2009, determined that theaters surveyed within the past 10-15 years would not be included in the potential list of theaters to be surveyed
- developed a verified list of demolished theaters and removed them from the potential survey list.
- confirmed and removed from the potential survey list Opera Houses that pre-dated the exhibition of movies and/or were documented by the State Historical Society of Iowa as never functioning as movie theaters;
- expanded the list of theaters, not previously surveyed through on-line research and direct phone communication with representatives of Certified Local Governments, county historical societies and other constituent communities and groups that had not responded to the 2007 questionnaire or the 2009 e-mail questionnaire. Energies were focused on finding theaters in counties with little or no representation in the SHPO inventory of movie theaters. Direct communication with constituents included:
  - Email requests for information to over 130 CLG and local preservationists. This effort resulted in twenty-five responses.
  - Direct calls to local government officials, local historians, and citizens of the area, all of which verified or updated historical information and/or status of the property.

Secondary source research included utilization of Internet websites with a focus on historic movie theatres which included:

- http://lostcines.blogspot.com/2006_02_01_archive.html
- http://movie-theatre.org/theatre.html
- http://www.film-tech.com/warehouse/wareview.php?id=1414&category=1
- http://www.cinematour.com/theatres/us/IA/3.html
- http://www.drivein-jim.net/g_l/driveinia.html
- http://www.drive-ins.com/srchdest.htm/code=ia/search_x=9/search_y=15/skip=0
- http://cinematreasures.org/search/

These websites were very useful for general information and some provided secondary information including year built, number of seats, architect, movie chain, current status, as well as digital photographs and newspaper clippings, first-hand accounts of employees, and sometimes a history of ownership and the last movie shown.

Invaluable information came from the research compiled from 1922-23 City Directories of all movie theater listings in Iowa by Mary Bennett, provided by the SHPO staff. This served as a pivotal base to verify information from other sources. In addition, it served as a list that survey staff could use to contact the local library or City Clerk to verify if the listed movie theaters remained extant.

This process identified 472 theaters (including the 268 theaters identified by the SHPO) which appeared to merit field investigation and documentation by virtue of their date of construction and/or operation. Investigation using Sanborn Map Company fire insurance maps, historic maps, and Google Mapping contributed to further analysis of these theaters revealing that thirty-three previously surveyed theaters in the SHPO survey database had subsequently been demolished. In addition, 118 theaters not previously documented in SHPO records were confirmed as demolished.

Further elimination to reach the funded survey of two hundred theaters included elimination of one hundred theaters due to:

- verification of lack of integrity;
- verification of construction dates after 1975 (the cut-off date for this project determined by the SHPO in accordance with their survey and planning strategies and goals);
- verification of previous survey documentation in the last fifteen years;
- listing in the National Register of Historic Places;
- priority given to counties that had not been surveyed for movie theaters or adequately surveyed for commercial buildings; and
- inability to verify if the movie theater remained extant.

As a result, 221 sites were identified and selected in consultation with the SHPO staff for field investigation and documentation. Prior to fieldwork, the survey teams attempted to contact theater owners to gain entrance into the theaters. This effort continued during the actual field investigation as well. The survey teams took digital photographs of all resources, including buildings in ruins, and performed a visual inspection of each resource to ascertain its style, period of construction, materials, and condition. In many instances, the survey staff did not have access to the interiors of the resources but documented interior conditions visible through glass windows and doors or as a result of conversation with employees or local citizens. Each project team was responsible for entering their survey information into the Microsoft Access database.

The two teams conducted field survey in the months of August through October 2009 and visited each of the 221 sites. Of these, 207 movie theater buildings were located, photographed and documented for entry into the survey database. Of the 207 surveyed, 109 were newly discovered and had no documentation in the SHPO files.

Construction dates were assigned based on analysis of information collected by previous cultural resource surveys under the direction of the State Historical Society of Iowa, www.cinematreasures.com web site information, published secondary sources, newspaper articles found in the State Historical Society of Iowa's vertical files and newspaperarchives.com; local county records, or construction dates on buildings. In all other cases, Kerry Davis assigned an estimated circa[1] date based on Sanborn Map Company fire insurance maps and known dates of construction of other buildings with similar architectural treatments in the area. Davis and Gilbride also used Sanborn Map Company fire insurance maps to resolve discrepancies in theater addresses and to confirm theater locations.

Sally Schwenk Associates reviewed their survey findings with Iowa SHPO staff and together selected one property eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The SHPO National Register staff contacted the property owner to determine their interest in having their property listed in the National Register.

Concurrent with the survey work, Sally Fullerton Schwenk conducted a literature search and research to begin developing broad historical contexts for the development and evolution of commercial movie theaters in Iowa. Schwenk began by reviewing survey information provided by the Iowa SHPO files, conducting research at the State Historical Society of Iowa's research library, and completing a search of secondary literature on American movie theater history, movie theater history in Iowa and in the Midwest, as well as historical contexts documenting the history of the state. These resources are reflected in the Selected Bibliography of this MPDF. Upon completion of the survey phase of the project, Schwenk reviewed the information yielded in the intensive level survey of the 207 theaters documented within the context of information yielded in previous surveys.

The Iowa SHPO staff provided hard copies of previous survey forms for review and copies of newspaper publications of advertisements and general movie news articles, literature from the period that were particularly helpful in identifying patterns in advertising, community values, and exhibition practices. These sources and on-line access to six Iowa newspaper archival repositories through

[1] Indicating a date range of five years before or after the circa date.

Newspaperarchive.com was instrumental in verification of the national practices that controlled movie exhibition in the United States as they occurred in Iowa.

Survey information related to movie theaters in Iowa is limited to buildings identified as part of community survey and the development of the Opera House Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Footlights in Farm Country: Iowa Opera Houses, 1835-1940." As would be expected when no systematic survey focused specifically on movie theaters has occurred, the level of information is not consistent and is dated. Furthermore, the type of database and fields that evolved over the years presented difficulties in comprehensive retrieval of data that allowed production of computer generated spreadsheets for comparative analysis, particularly as this related to functional and architectural property types associated with movie theaters specifically. This is not unusual at state preservation agencies where initial database fields were designed for community-wide and rural survey, and the ability to integrate new technology and data is always problematic. For example, the frequent changes in movie theater names and ownership by chains was a complicating factor in retrieval and analysis of data, particularly where on-going survey in a community might identify a movie theater under numerous names and ownerships. These types of data gaps served, in part, as the basis for the SHPO initiation of this intensive level survey project and the preparation of a MPDF that can be expanded as new information is identified and retrieved, such as the development of a database with fields specific to the movie theater property type that evolved out of the survey.

Of significant importance was the research of Iowa city directories in the post World War I time period by volunteer researcher Mary Bennett. This and secondary information recorded on the *Cinema Treasures*.org database contributed by volunteer bloggers, assisted in the analysis of types of theaters, seating capacity, known architects, location, relationship to population, name changes, ownership, renovations and demolition. Descriptions in this and other on-line sites developed by volunteer historic movie theater buffs, particularly the posting of both historic and contemporary photographs, the posting was particularly valuable. In particular, these information venues assisted in the verification of facts. In addition, National Register nominations of movie theaters in Iowa and National Register Multiple Property Documentation Forms for theaters and opera houses in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Idaho, and Washington proved to be valuable models and provided comparative information.

There are many published books and articles on the development of movie theaters in the United States. In developing the historic context for historic movie theaters of Iowa and identifying specific property types, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States (Wisconsin Studies in Film)* by Douglas Gomery and *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie*

Theater, by Maggie Valentine were particularly helpful. Michael Putnam's *Silent Screens: The Decline and Transformation of the American Movie Theater (Creating the North American Landscape)* provided important contexts relating to the development of early movie theaters and their associated economic contexts. The focus on information about the issues involved in the exhibition of movies found in Ross Melnick and Andreas Fuchs' *Cinema Treasures: A New look at Classic Movie Theaters,* complemented and augmented Douglas Gomery's work. The chronological format and focus on specific issues of each period of movie theater development provided additional insight into the national contexts that affected exhibitors in Iowa. All of these sources addressed at some length the eras and theaters not associated with the grand Movie Palace architecture and productions, providing valuable information applicable to the Main Street cinema of the community hall, opera house theater, conversion theater, nickelodeon theater, purpose-built vaudeville theater and commercial block downtown and neighborhood movie house of Iowa.

Finally, it is important to note that the MPDF is a flexible document, and can be amended and should be expanded upon as time passes. Of particular note in the methodology that established the research parameters of this MPDF was a time frame that went beyond the National Register program's arbitrary fifty-year cut-off date considered to be the minimal sufficient time in which to evaluate the significance of historic resources. In light of the MPDF's cut-off date of 1975, it is expected that significant patterns of development of movie theaters in the 1970s and 1980s will become more apparent with additional study and research. The literature search that was part of this MPDF project's methodology and subsequent research indicates that academic study has occurred in this time period relating to motion picture exhibition. The era of the 1970s is one of significant change and growth in the exhibition of movies and preliminary research from various survey projects as well as this project indicates that many of the early multiplexes are endangered, in part, because of their initial location in malls that are now being demolished. Moreover, technological changes and the relatively small size of these and of self-standing multiplexes at locations that were once the first tier of suburban development, renders this property sub-type to be economically obsolete. Research conducted for this project indicates that the cut-off date of 1975 as specified in the request for proposal and contracted scope of work was consciously arbitrary because of the lack of survey information at the time that provided an end date based on adequate data and analysis. However, research and field investigation associated with the preparation of this MPDF revealed that the 1975 cut-off date interrupts significant patterns that originated before and continued after that date. It is expected that survey efforts to update previous survey of movie theaters will yield additional and more consistent information relating to patterns in movie exhibition in Iowa. While it is also expected that additional in-depth information as it relates to historic contexts developed in this MPDF will be expanded with the research associated with the preparation of individual nominations to be

utilized with this MPDF as part of a Multiple Property Submission, survey planning should also prioritize the survey of movie theaters through to the era of the megaplex as well as focus on updating and, where necessary, augmenting previous survey data.

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