Thematic Survey of Historic Movie Theaters in Central Oklahoma
2004-2005

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Submitted by:

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Geography at Oklahoma State University represented by Dr. Alyson L. Greiner as the Principal Investigator and Marvin Sebourn as the Research Assistant, conducted a thematic survey of historic movie theaters in central Oklahoma during the 2004-2005 fiscal year. This survey was carried out under contract to the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office. The survey covered Management Region #6, a seven-county area including Canadian, Cleveland, Kingfisher, Lincoln, Logan, Oklahoma, and Payne counties. Sixty-three movie theaters were photographed and documented using the Historic Preservation Resource Inventory Form. Many more properties were researched in the process of piecing together the chronology of movie theaters—including when they existed and where—for central Oklahoma.

This document constitutes the project report for the thematic survey. It explains the research methods used, includes a discussion of the indoor and drive-in theaters surveyed, and presents the results of the project. The historic context provides background information on the rise of film, its diffusion, and impact on the material culture and quality of life. It presents national trends and discusses the ways in which Oklahoma's experience parallels or diverges from those trends. Particular emphasis is placed on establishing the basic social and economic history of indoor and outdoor movie theaters in Oklahoma from the days of silent film up to the present. The evolution of movie theater architecture is also examined. An annotated bibliography reviews the essential documents and publications related to the various facets of the history and architecture of movie theaters. Professor John Womack of the Department of

Architecture at Oklahoma State University prepared the architectural review. Taken together, this information can be utilized to help determine the eligibility of specific properties for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, with subsequent amendments, established a unique federal, state, and local partnership for the identification, evaluation, and protection of significant prehistoric and historic resources. While each state determines its specific program emphases and defines its major goals, cultural resource planning at the federal level builds upon work at the state and local levels. These interconnections are outlined in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines (1983). For example, thematic surveys—conducted at the local level and managed by state historic preservation offices—constitute part of the cultural resource identification process or inventory phase. These surveys provide documentation and evaluation of properties potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The next stage involves applying the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. These criteria establish standards and guidelines that are applied to all properties nominated to the National Register. A property that successfully meets these criteria may be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Identifying, evaluating, and nominating properties involves considerable fieldwork and research. As research proceeds it is not uncommon to discover new areas or additional properties that merit further study, or to find that individual properties or districts have lost integrity or no longer exist. Such discoveries are documented and provide information for future planning decisions. Therefore, comprehensive preservation

planning involves a series of interrelated steps, and remains an organic process that incorporates new information as it is acquired.

This thematic survey of historic movie theaters in central Oklahoma demonstrates the implementation of Oklahoma's comprehensive planning process. The survey identifies individual properties that: (1) meet eligibility criteria for the National Register, (2) warrant further study for inclusion in the National Register, and (3) are ineligible for the National Register. Surveys like this not only increase the area of the state surveyed, but also provide important data for making sound cultural resource management policy and city planning decisions.

Completion of this project was a collaborative effort. Dr. Alyson Greiner, Associate Professor of Geography at Oklahoma State University, served as principal investigator for the grant and conducted the survey. Marvin Sebourn, graduate student in the Department of Geography served as the Research Assistant, and Dr. John Womack, Associate Professor in the Department of Architecture at Oklahoma State University, served as the architectural historian and project consultant. All work was performed under a contract from the Oklahoma Historical Society (04-401) using funds from the U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of this project followed standard scholarly practice. We consulted a diverse collection of sources in order to help understand the forces affecting the creation, survival, and loss of movie theaters in the region. In particular, primary materials including Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, newspaper accounts, city and telephone directories, and archival materials were consulted. Resources at the Edmond Historical Society, El Reno Public Library, Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma were especially helpful. In addition, the Edmon Low Library at Oklahoma State University made possible digital access to two very useful databases. One was the archives of the *Daily Oklahoman*, and the other was to the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Although digital access to the Sanborns occurred late in the project, it proved to be a valuable resource. This project also involved travel to and fieldwork at the sites of the various indoor and drive-in theaters.

The principal investigator followed the procedures used in previous survey projects completed for the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office (OK/SHPO), and the guidelines for thematic surveys set forth in *Architectural/Historic Resource Survey: A Field Guide*. Specific procedures included:

1) compiling a list of historic indoor and drive-in movie theaters in the seven-county study area. A number of different sources were used to generate this list. One included the Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory Database, now accessible on the Web at http://www.ocgi.okstate.edu/shpo/. Two other Web-based sources helped to identify movie theaters. They were "Cinema Tour" at

http://www.cinematour.com/main.php, and "Rivest's Ultimate List of Movie Theaters" at http://www.movie-theatre.org/.

2) consulting other relevant thematic surveys conducted for the OK/SHPO such as the "Architectural/Historic Intensive Level Survey of Certain Portions of El Reno, Canadian County, Oklahoma" (1989), the "Reconnaissance Level Survey of a Portion of Central Oklahoma City" (1992), and the "Reconnaissance Level Survey of Portions of Oklahoma City (Northeast, Northwest, and South Oklahoma City)" (1994).
3) identifying existing local histories, especially city and county materials, for use in the preparation of the historic context. Materials such as newspaper accounts and locally written reports were located in the various public libraries and historical societies in the study region.
4) conducting site visits in order to photograph and document the movie theaters. Properties were surveyed using the Historic Preservation Resource Inventory Form. Black-and-white photographs were made of all of the buildings surveyed.
5) preparing thumbnail sketches of the buildings or, in the case of drive-ins, the structures.
6) evaluating properties in terms of their eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

III. PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND AREA SURVEYED

The fundamental objective of this thematic survey of historic movie theaters in central Oklahoma is to identify those individual properties that on the basis of age and integrity warrant further study to determine their eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. For the purposes of this project, the theaters need to have been built in 1960 or earlier to meet the age requirement that properties eligible for listing in the National Register be at least forty-five years old.

A related objective of this project is to increase the area of the state inventoried at the thematic and reconnaissance level. This constitutes part of the ongoing Oklahoma Comprehensive Survey Program. Properties surveyed for this project were recorded at a minimum level of documentation and were classified on the basis of whether they warrant further study or do not warrant further study for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. An additional objective includes identifying and annotating the reference materials necessary for completing any National Register nominations for properties located in the study area.

The survey area specified by this project covered the following seven counties: Canadian, Cleveland, Kingfisher, Lincoln, Logan, Oklahoma, and Payne (see Figure 1). Naturally, the larger towns and cities are the places where historic movie theaters have remained concentrated. Therefore, this report does reflect a greater emphasis on urban centers.

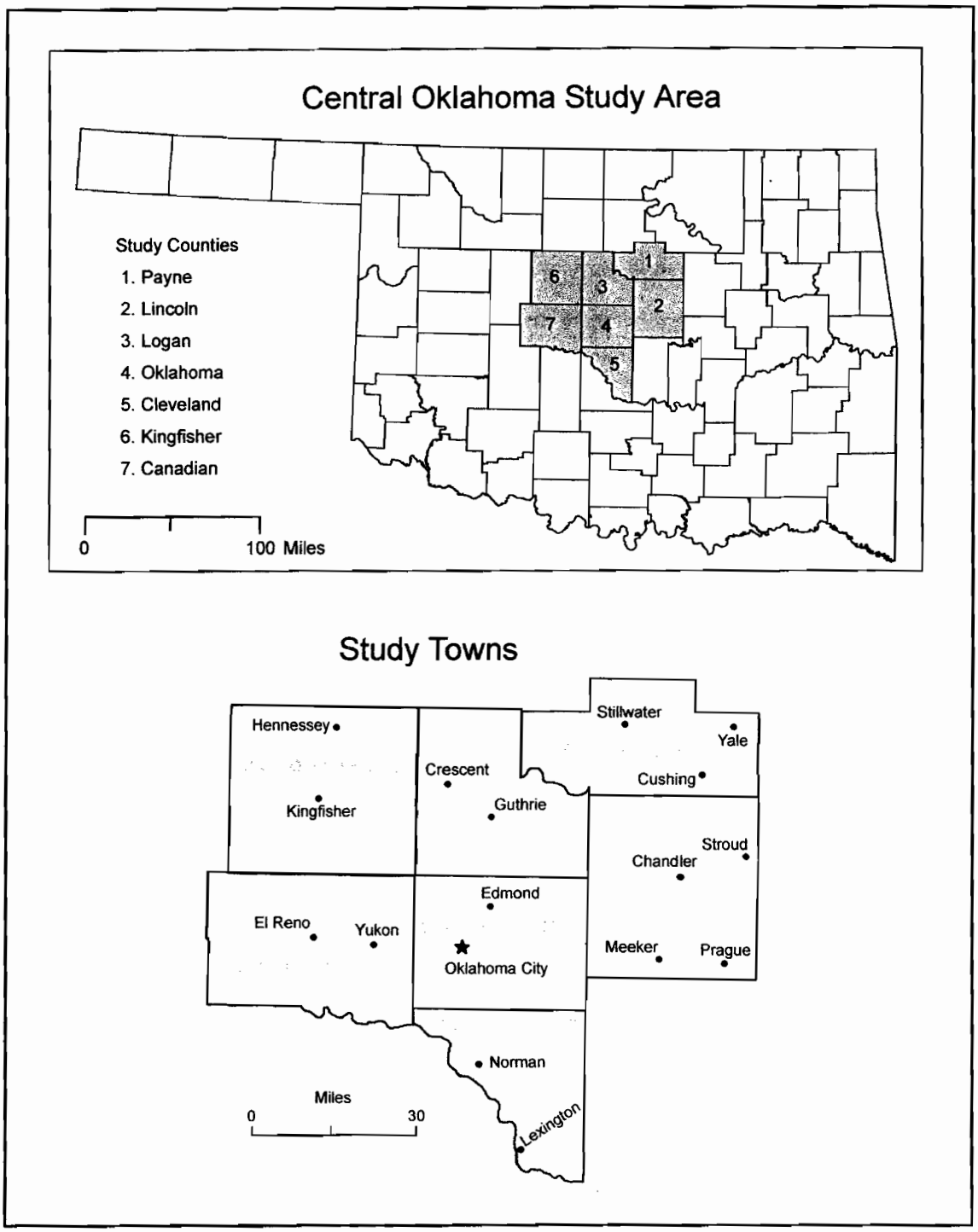

Central Oklahoma Study Area
Study Counties
1. Payne
2. Lincoln
3. Logan
4. Oklahoma
5. Cleveland
6. Kingfisher
7. Canadian
0
100 Miles
Study Towns
Hennessey
Kingfisher
Crescent
Guthrie
Stillwater
Yale
Cushing
Stroud
Chandler
Edmond
El Reno
Yukon
Oklahoma City
Meeker
Prague
Norman
Lexington
Miles
0
30

Figure 1

IV. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this project followed professional standards. Initially, the principal investigator compiled a bibliography of material pertinent to the topic of movie theaters, their history, and evolution. Once a bibliography had been assembled, the principal investigator read the pertinent sources, developed an annotated bibliography, and prepared a historic context. Fieldwork began during the winter of 2004. During the course of the research for this project it was often necessary to meet with and informally interview certain individuals knowledgeable of a particular building's history or a specific theater. In the process, individual properties were documented and photographed.

Before we obtained electronic access to the digital Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, numerous visits were made to the map library in the Edmon Low Library on the OSU campus in order to consult the microfilm versions of the maps. These maps and USGS topographic quadrangles were consulted for lot and block numbers, dates of construction, and township and range information needed to complete the Historic Preservation Resource Inventory forms. Black-and-white 5x7 inch prints with appropriate labels were placed in acid-free envelopes, and contact sheets were generated. The principal investigator then prepared thumbnail sketches for the project report.

Following the completion of fieldwork, data on survey forms was entered into the Web-based Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory Database. The forms, 5x7 inch prints, and field notes were placed in file folders and organized by address. Several computer-generated maps showing the locations of theaters were also designed.

V. RESULTS

This section highlights the findings of this survey.

1. This thematic survey produced minimum-level documentation for sixty-three (63) properties in the study area. Thumbnail sketches were prepared for all documented properties.
2. Thirty-two (32) properties were identified as theaters at some point in their past, but do not warrant further study. These properties are listed in Section XIII of this report.
3. Ten (10) properties listed in the National Register were updated. It should be noted that, with one exception, these properties were identified as contributing resources to historic districts that are listed in the National Register. These properties are listed below.

   Cleveland County

   a) Sooner Theatre,[1] Norman (listed individually in the National Register; located at 101-103 East Main Street);

   b) Varsity Theatre, Norman (in the Norman Historic District at 108 East Main Street);

   c) Seawell Opera House, Norman (in the Norman Historic District at 111-113 East Main Street);

   d) University Theatre, Norman (in the Norman Historic District at 225-227 East Main Street);

[1] Often theater names retained the British spelling "theatre." This report retains this usage when giving the business names.

Logan County

e) Pollard Theatre, Guthrie (in the Guthrie Historic District at 120 West Harrison Avenue);

f) Dewey Building/Cimarron Theatre (in the Guthrie Historic District at 102-104 West Harrison Avenue);

g) Moffitt Building/Pedigo Theatre (in the Guthrie Historic District at 112 West Oklahoma Avenue);

Oklahoma County

h) Tower Theatre, Oklahoma City (in the Jefferson Park Historic District at 423-425 Northwest 23rd Street);

i) Plaza Theatre, Oklahoma City (in the Gatewood Historic District at 1725 Northwest 16th Street);

j) Rodeo Theatre, Oklahoma City (in the Stockyards City Historic District at 2221-2223 Exchange Avenue).

4. Two (2) properties documented are potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because of their architecture and their connection with the entertainment history of their respective cities. These properties include:

   a) Knob Hill Theatre, Oklahoma City (404 Southwest 25th Street), and

   b) Dunkin Theatre, Cushing (205 East Broadway Street).

5. A total of 19 of the 63 properties documented and surveyed warrant further study. These properties are:

4. Two (2) properties documented are potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because of their architecture and their connection with the entertainment history of their respective cities. These properties include:

    a) Knob Hill Theatre, Oklahoma City (404 Southwest 25th Street), and

    b) Dunkin Theatre, Cushing (205 East Broadway Street).

5. A total of 19 of the 63 properties documented and surveyed warrant further study. These properties are:

    Canadian County

    a) El Reno Theatre, El Reno (104-108 North Bickford Avenue),

    b) Jewel Theatre, El Reno (107-109 North Bickford Avenue),

    c) El Caro/Centre Theatre, El Reno (110-112 South Bickford Avenue);

    Kingfisher County

    d) Ortman Theatre, Hennessey (110 North Main Street).

    e) Pappe Building/Electric Theatre, Kingfisher (204 North Main Street),

    f) 312 West Main Street, Stroud;

    Logan County

    g) 113-117 South Grand Avenue, Crescent,

    h) Beacon Drive-In, Guthrie (2404 South Division Street);

    Oklahoma County

    i) Yale Theatre, Oklahoma City (229 Southwest 25th Street),

    j) Jewel Theatre, Oklahoma City (904 Northeast 4th Street),

    k) Ritz Theatre, Oklahoma City (912 Northwest Britton Road),

Payne County

r) 109 East Broadway, Cushing,

s) Leachman Theatre, Stillwater (424 South Main Street).

6. Of the 63 properties documented in this study, three (3) were drive-in theaters. The rest (60) were indoor theaters.

7. Narrative descriptions were prepared for all buildings and structures (drive-ins) deemed to warrant further study, or be potentially eligible for or already listed in the National Register.

VI. KINDS OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES PRESENT IN THE SURVEYED AREA

The nature of this survey has necessarily limited the kinds of historic properties surveyed and reported on here. Movie theaters essentially came in two types: the indoor variety and the outdoor variety. Several decades before there were drive-in movie theaters people might watch a movie outdoors in what was known as an air dome. Whether indoor or outdoor, both kinds can be classified as entertainment/recreation-related properties. Because many of the early movie houses were located downtown, often on Main Street, these properties might also be considered commercial properties. Both of these kinds of properties are described briefly below.

Commercial Properties

It is not uncommon, architecturally speaking, to find movie houses designed in the Commercial Style, or more specifically, the Plains Commercial Style. This style prevails in the downtowns across Oklahoma; it is the iconic storefront architecture. The Plains Commercial Style is characterized by brick cladding on one, two, or three-story buildings. Typically these buildings have only minimal decoration like corbelled cornices or other decorative brickwork, parapets, roofline coping, arched windows, and recessed entrances. In this way, the nickelodeons of the first two decades of the twentieth century "fit in." That is, they really were no different from the other downtown commercial properties. Some good examples of the Plains Commercial Style include the Cimarron Theatre in Guthrie (102-104 West Oklahoma) and the Varsity Theatre in Norman (108

East Main Street). Also in Norman, the Seawell Opera House (111-113 East Main Street) is another good example of a relatively unadorned Commercial Style building. This particular building was initially used for vaudeville entertainment and was later turned into a movie theater.

Of course, in some instances the decoration on these commercial buildings was more elaborate, giving rise to examples of commercial buildings that are Italianate in style. The best examples of this are the Dunkin Theatre in Cushing (205-207 East Broadway Street) and the Pollard Theatre in Guthrie (120-122 West Harrison Avenue). Another good example can be found in El Reno's Jewel Theatre (107 North Bickford Avenue).

Entertainment/Recreation-Related Properties

Most of the theaters documented in this survey were built in the 1920s or more recently. As a result they tend to reflect Art Deco and/or Moderne styling. The Art Deco style prevailed between 1925 and 1940. It was characterized by smooth wall surfaces and architectural detailing that emphasized verticality. Decorative geometric patterns like chevrons, zigzags, and parallel straight lines are commonly found on Art Deco buildings. Art Deco styling goes hand-in-hand with the rise of the picture palaces beginning in the late 1920s. The message of the Art Deco style, particularly as it applied to movie theaters, was multifaceted. Movie theaters became attractions. They were, therefore, meant to be seen. The verticality favored in Art Deco designs accommodated the tall, neon-lit signs and projecting, curved marquees. Movie theaters were places of escape and the Art Deco

style enhanced the nature of movie theaters as a different kind of space and place. Good examples of Art Deco movie theaters are the Tower Theatre (423-425 Northwest 23rd Street) and the Rodeo Theatre (2221-2223 Exchange Avenue). Both are in Oklahoma City.

The Moderne style was popular from the 1930s to about 1950. The characteristic features of this style include curved or rounded corners, curved windows, smooth wall surfaces, and roof-line copings. This was a more streamlined style, sometimes with very minimal decoration. In contrast to Art Deco, Moderne tended to emphasize horizontality but also movement. It also imparted a sleek, futuristic character to theaters. Often movie theaters exhibited mixtures of both Art Deco and Moderne styles. The best examples of movie theaters in the Moderne style are in Oklahoma City and include the Knob Hill Theatre (404 Southwest 25th Street) and the Penn Theatre (1212 North Pennsylvania Avenue).

VII. LIST OF NATIONAL REGISTER UPDATES

1. Sooner Theatre
   101-103 East Main Street
   Norman, OK
   Note: Listed in the National Register as of August 31, 1978.

2. Varsity Theatre
   108 East Main Street
   Norman, OK
   Note: Part of the Norman Historic District, listed in the National Register as of October 10, 1978.

3. Seawell Opera House
   111-113 East Main Street
   Norman, OK
   Note: Part of the Norman Historic District, listed in the National Register as of October 10, 1978.

4. University Theatre
   225-227 East Main Street
   Norman, OK
   Note: Part of the Norman Historic District, listed in the National Register as of October 10, 1978.

5. Pollard Theatre
   120 West Harrison Avenue
   Norman, OK
   Note: Part of the Guthrie Historic District, listed in the National Register as of June 3, 1974.

6. Dewey Building/Cimarron Theatre
   102-104 West Harrison Avenue
   Guthrie, OK
   Note: Part of the Guthrie Historic District, listed in the National Register as of June 3, 1974.

7. Moffitt Building/Pedigo Theatre
   112 West Oklahoma Avenue
   Guthrie, OK
   Note: Part of the Guthrie Historic District, listed in the National Register as of June 3, 1974.

8. Tower Theatre
   423-425 Northwest 23rd Street
   Oklahoma City, OK
   Note: Part of the Jefferson Park Historic District, listed in the National Register as of December 14, 1995.

9. Plaza Theatre
   1725 Northwest 16th Street
   Oklahoma City, OK
   Note: Part of the Gatewood Historic District, listed in the National Register as of December 14, 1995.

10. Rodeo Theatre
    2221-2223 Exchange Avenue
    Oklahoma City, OK
    Note: Part of the Stockyards City Historic District, listed in the National Register as of August 24, 1979.

VIII. THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF UPDATES TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER

1. **Sooner Theatre** (101-103 East Main Street, Norman). Built in 1929.

This building was designed by Harold Gimeno, described as one of Oklahoma's first significant architects. It was the first business structure to embody the Spanish Colonial style of architecture and is believed to be the oldest surviving example of this style. It is a three-story brick building with cast concrete cornice. Above the "Sooner Theatre" sign are three round arched windows with keystones above them. On either side of these windows are ornately decorated arches. Inside, the auditorium seats a total of 819 people, with 585 on the main floor. It has high vaulted ceilings with massive carved and hand decorated beaming. There is a proscenium-style stage, 28 feet wide and 30 feet deep. The opening in the stage itself measures the same dimensions. Changes to the original building include installation of air conditioning, closing-up of some doors and windows, replacement of the marquee, and adding tile to the first floor façade.

2. **Varsity Theatre** (108 East Main Street, Norman). Built in 1902-1903.

This is a two-story, brick-clad Commercial style building with a deeply recessed entry. The façade is asymmetrical. Decorative corbelling stretches across the façade just below the roof line. This building occupies the site of one of the wooden buildings that burned as a result of the great fire of 1902. It operated as a movie theater from the nineteen teens to about 1954.

3. **Seawell Opera House** (111-113 East Main Street, Norman). Built circa 1894, enlarged/remodeled c. 1903.

This is a three-story Commercial style building that is rather unadorned. Walls are stucco. The façade is symmetrical and two rows of seven windows span the second and third floors. Each window is topped with its own metal awning. This building was Norman's opera house in the 1890s. It was also the first three-story building in the downtown. After the turn of the century it was enlarged. By 1918 it was a motion picture theater and remained so until the 1920s when it became a hotel.

4. **University Theatre** (225-227 East Main Street, Norman). Built circa 1927.

This is a two-story brick clad Art Deco style building. Some alterations have affected the first floor façade, but the second floor retains the integrity of the building. Alternating wide and slender pilasters capped with floral patterns decorate the façade. Floral patterns decorate the tops of windows on the second floor as well. This building was the Hyde Drug Store for a number of years. Before that it was University Theatre from 1925-1959.

5. **Pollard Theatre** (120-122 West Harrison Avenue, Guthrie). Built in 1901.

This is a two-story Italianate-style theater with brick cladding. The building has an attractive mixture of buff and red brick. There are some alterations to the first floor, including the addition of new windows. First use of the building as a theater dates to 1919. It has been used for live performances since the 1980s and appears to be the longest continually operating theater in Guthrie.

6. **Dewey Building/Cimarron Theatre** (102-104 West Harrison Avenue, Guthrie). Built circa 1901.

This two-story Commercial style building has brick cladding. The façade is nearly symmetrical with a central entrance flanked by two other entrances, one of which is deeply recessed. Seven windows with semi-elliptical arches mark the second floor. The 102-portion of the building was the Cimarron Theatre from about 1926-1948. Originally this space housed a bank.

7. **Moffitt Building/Pedigo Theatre** (112 West Oklahoma Avenue, Guthrie). Built in 1899.

This is a two-story Romanesque Revival style building with brick cladding. The first floor façade has been altered with new windows and a large awning and sign. The second floor retains the feel of the Romanesque Revival style with the two wide Romanesque arches. This was the Pedigo Theatre from the late 1920s, then the State Theatre.

8. **Tower Theatre** (423-425 Northwest 23rd Street, Oklahoma City). Built circa 1937.

The entrance to the theater lobby is sandwiched between two storefronts. The whole complex is probably the Tower Building and reveals a mix of influences from the Art Deco, Moderne, and Modern Movement styles. The west storefront has a stuccoed second story with a high parapet. The entrance to the theater lobby has a projecting neon marquee composed of a series of staggered circles spelling "tower," and a triangular sign

board. An elongated stacked course brick veneer covers walls around theater doors and is not original. The east storefront second story has paired hung windows and a continuous cast sill. Fixed display windows flank a recessed entry. Glazed black brick runs along the east pilaster and above the covered clerestory.

9. **Plaza Theatre** (1725 Northwest 16th Street, Oklahoma City). Built in 1935.

This is a Moderne style theater lobby that is more than one story in height. It has a tall stuccoed parapet and round-edged awning with a tall vertical sign on one side of the awning. The theater lobby has brick corner walls and the theater auditorium has an arched roof behind the stepped parapet facing the side street. The vertical sign has large projecting block letters spelling "plaza cinema theatre" and is braced with chains. There are three attached buildings here: two narrow buildings in the strip center face 16th Street, with the right building the theater entrance with parapet, full-façade awning, and inset entrance. To the left is a single-bay store front. To the back is the theater auditorium with screen-end of the building facing Gatewood.

10. **Rodeo Theatre** (2221-2223 Exchange Avenue, Oklahoma City). Built in 1922.

This one-story, brick, Commercial style building has a flat roof and parapet wall. The façade is symmetrical and the entrance has been made into a storefront. The left and right bays were originally very small stores. The center portion, which is now predominantly filled in with wood, was the original entrance into this old movie theater.

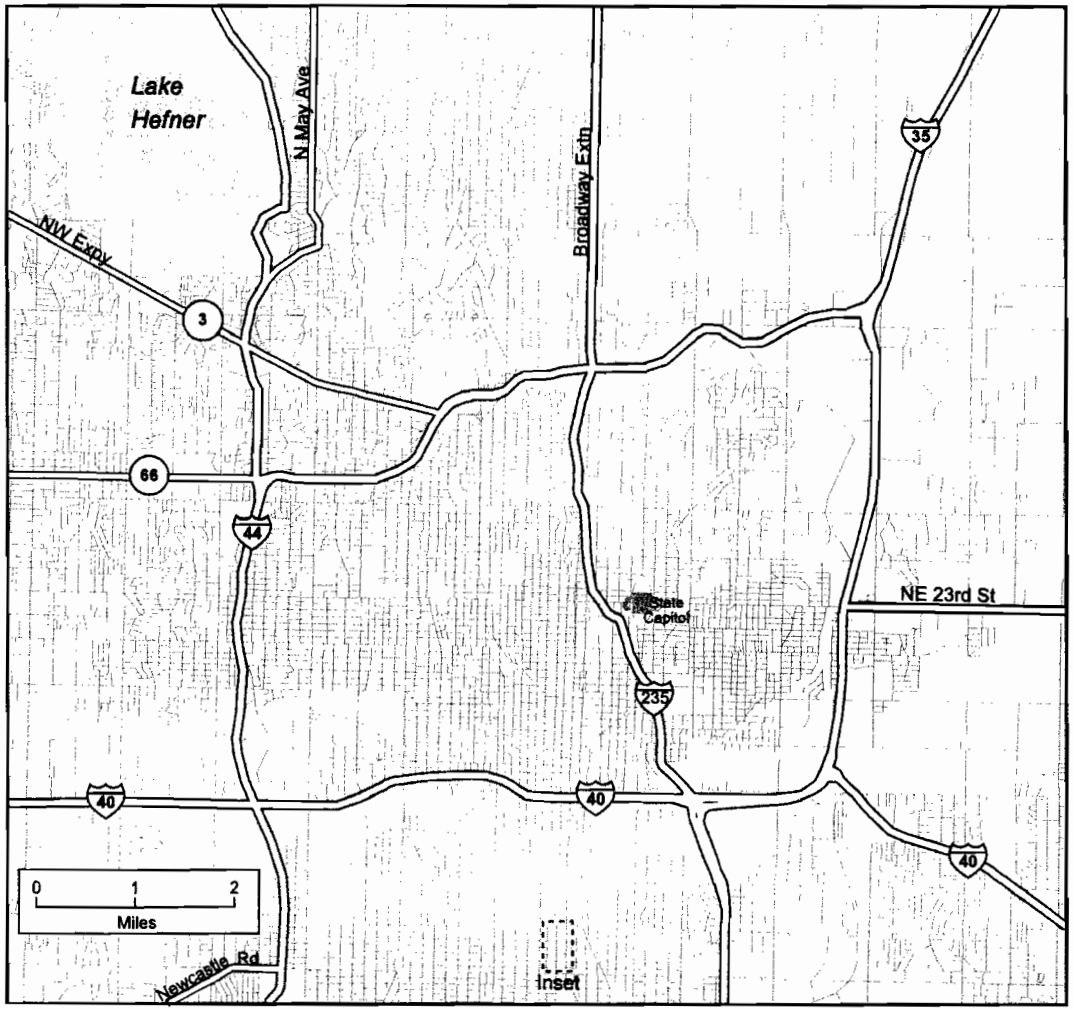
The central portion of the building is decorated with ceramic tile. The top of the cornice is in black. Below that is a row of lighter tile with diamond designs. Checkerboard patterns of tile are also set on either side of the vertical sign which is not original.

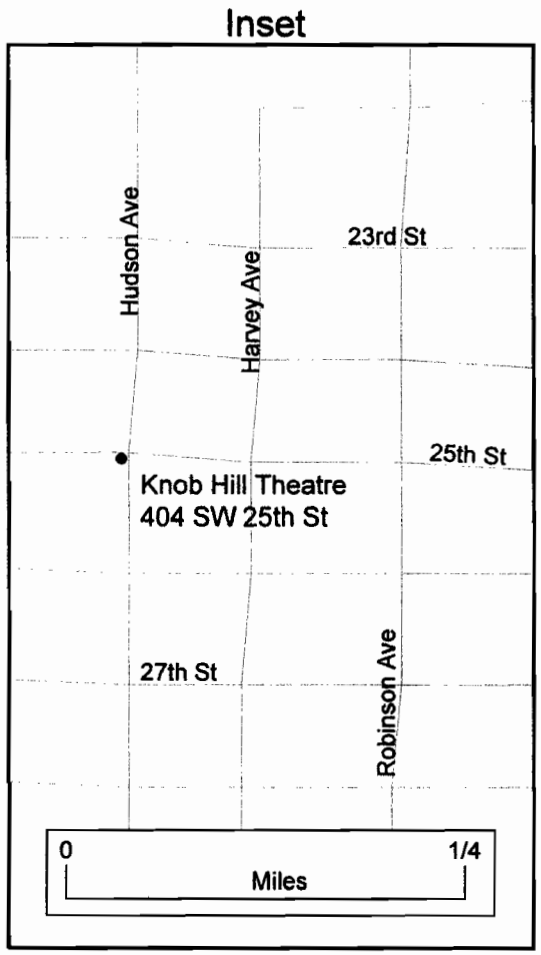
IX. LIST OF PROPERTIES THAT ARE NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBLE

1. Knob Hill Theatre
   404 Southwest 25th Street
   Oklahoma City, OK

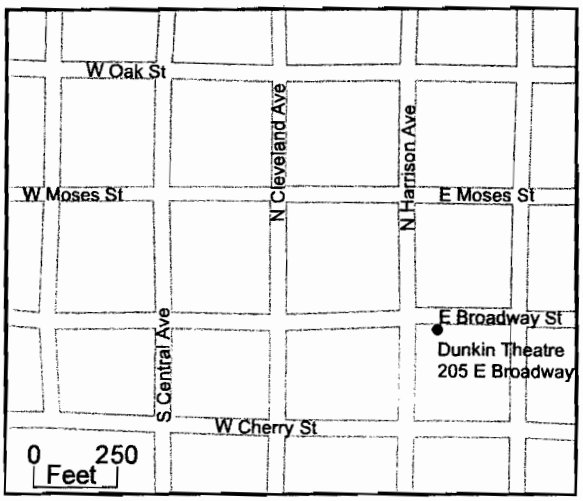
2. Dunkin Theatre
   205 East Broadway Street
   Cushing, OK

National Register Eligible Property in Oklahoma City





National Register Eligible Property in Cushing



Portion of Downtown Cushing

X. THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF PROPERTIES THAT ARE NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBLE

1. **Knob Hill Theatre** (404 Southwest 25th Street, Oklahoma City). Built in 1947.

This is a four-story Moderne style theater that has a buff brick façade with red brick side walls. The façade is symmetrical and has a central concave, curved stone veneer panel and brick side panels. A prominent, but not original, vertical sign extends approximately one-story above the parapet. There are fifteen fixed pane windows on either side of the façade at the base of the sign. A large triangular-shaped marquee (with curved points) stretches the full width of the façade, above the entrance. The entrance is recessed with doors on either side of the ticket booth. The raised portion at the back of the building appears to be curtain-raising towers.

2. **Dunkin Theatre** (205 East Broadway Street, Cushing). Built in 1938.

This is a two story Commercial style theater with Italianate detailing. The original ornate terra-cotta tiles and pilasters on the façade of the building have been retained. Five classical columns are designed to resemble spiral-wrapped or garlanded columns. The theater marquee and concession area appear to date from the 1960s. With one exception, the second floor windows have been painted over with beige paint, some of which is peeling. Some water damage on the ceiling of second floor is visible. This is an original single screen theater that has not been twinned. The balcony and second floor are not in use. The two small storefronts flanking the theater entrance are also not in use.

XI. LIST OF PROPERTIES THAT WARRANT FURTHER STUDY

Canadian County

1. El Reno Theatre
   104-108 North Bickford Avenue
   El Reno, OK

2. Jewel Theatre
   107-109 North Bickford Avenue
   El Reno, OK

3. El Caro/Centre Theatre
   110-112 South Bickford Avenue
   El Reno, OK

Kingfisher County

4. Ortman Theatre
   110 North Main Street
   Hennessey, OK

5. Pappe Building/Electric Theatre
   204 North Main Street
   Kingfisher, OK

Lincoln County

6. Barton Building
   312 West Main Street
   Stroud, OK

Logan County

7. 113-117 South Grand Avenue
   Crescent, OK

8. Beacon Drive-In
   2404 South Division Street
   Guthrie, OK

Oklahoma County

9. Capitol Hill/Yale Theatre
   229 Southwest 25th Street
   Oklahoma City, OK

10. Jewel Theatre
    904 Northeast 4th Street
    Oklahoma City, OK

11. Ritz Theatre
    912 Northwest Britton Road
    Oklahoma City, OK

12. Penn Theatre
    1212 North Pennsylvania Avenue
    Oklahoma City, OK

13. May Theatre
    1515 North May Avenue
    Oklahoma City, OK

14. Victoria Theatre,
    1901 North Classen Boulevard
    Oklahoma City, OK

15. Agnew Theatre
    2821 Agnew Avenue
    Oklahoma City, OK

16. Will Rogers Theatre
    4322 North Western Avenue
    Oklahoma City

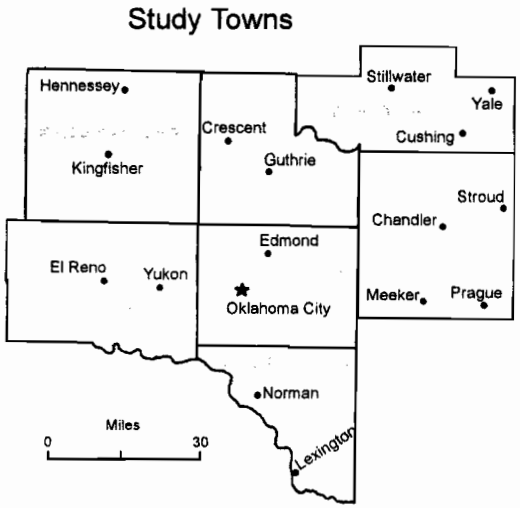
17. Del City Theatre
    2908 Epperly Drive
    Oklahoma City, OK

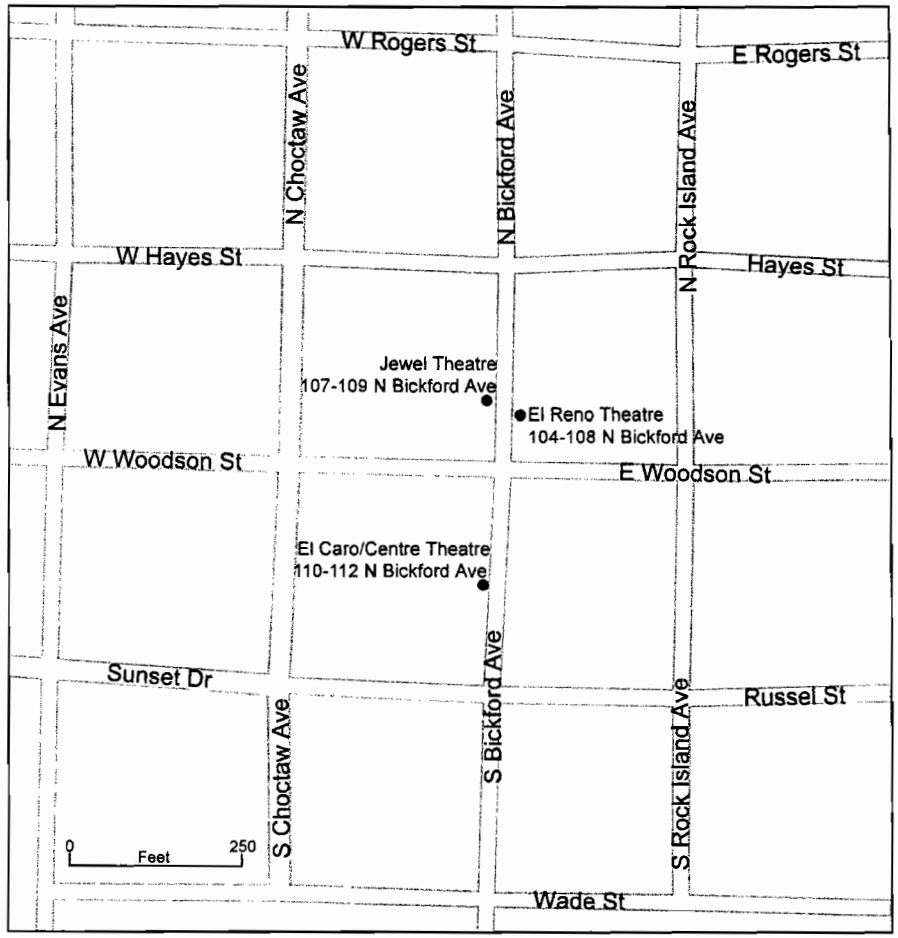
Payne County

18. 109 East Broadway Street,
    Cushing, OK

19. Leachman Theatre
    424 South Main Street
    Stillwater, OK

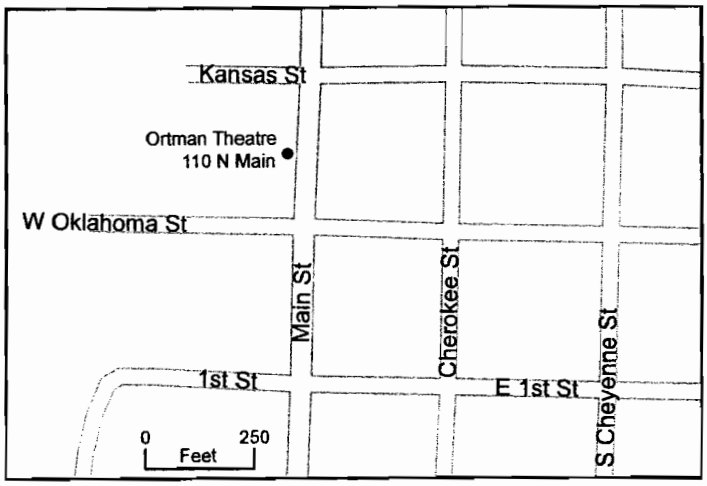
El Reno Properties Warranting Further Study





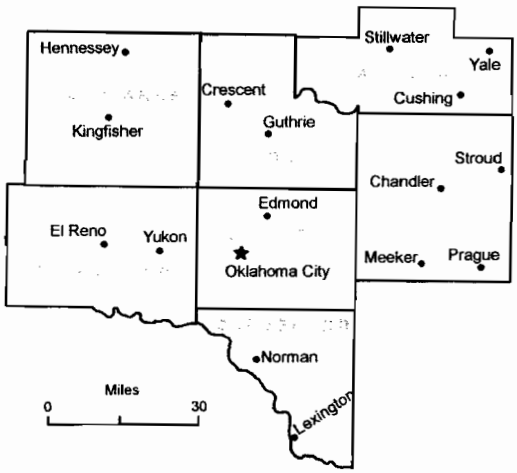
Portion of Downtown El Reno

Hennessey Property Warranting Further Study

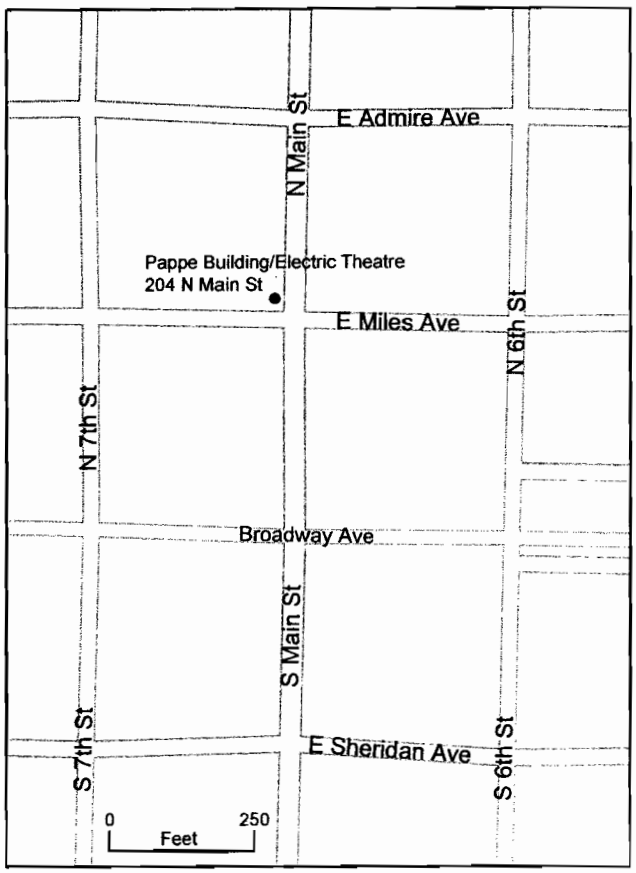


Portion of Downtown Hennessey

Study Towns

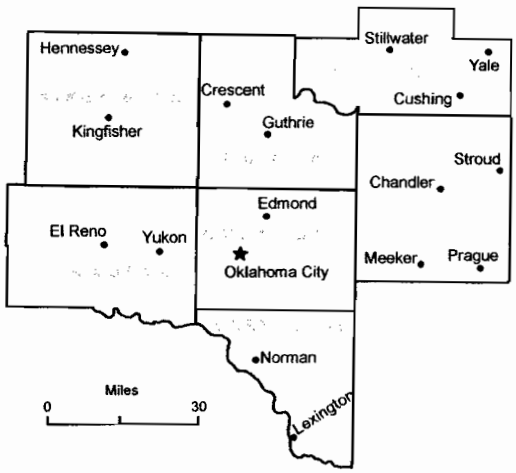


Kingfisher Property Warranting Further Study

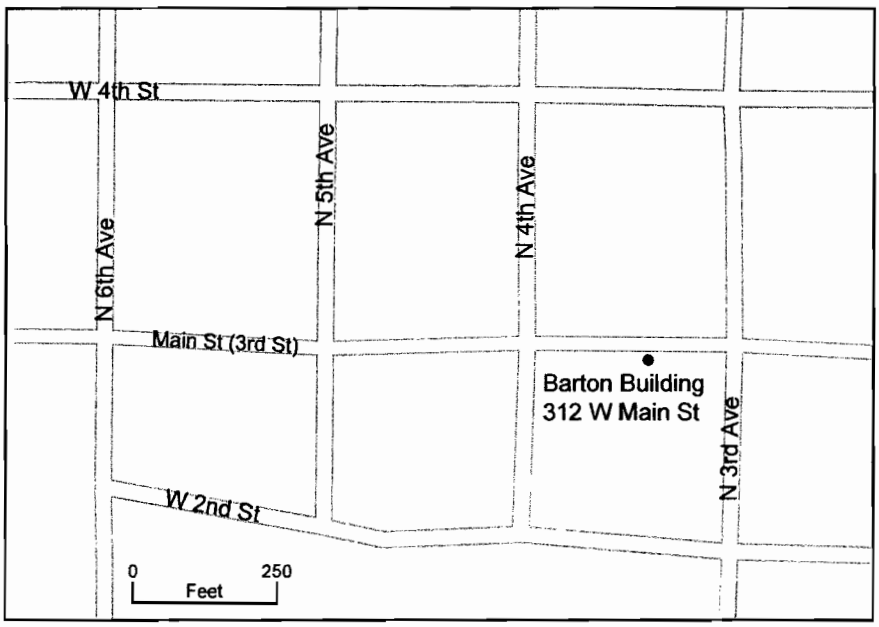


Portion of Downtown Kingfisher

Study Towns

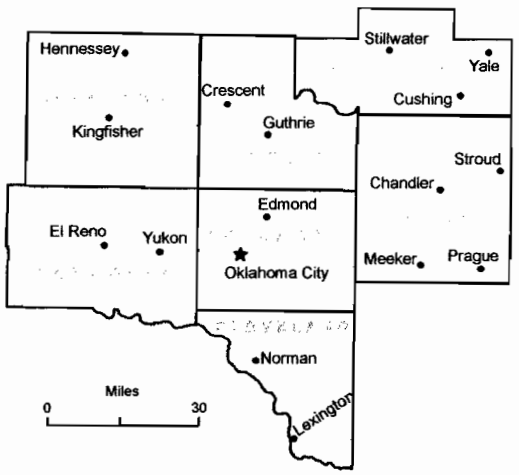


Stroud Property Warranting Further Study

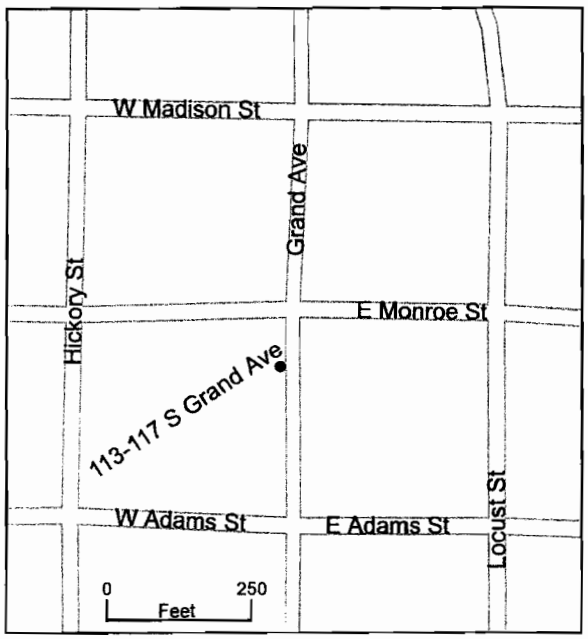


Portion of Downtown Stroud

Study Towns

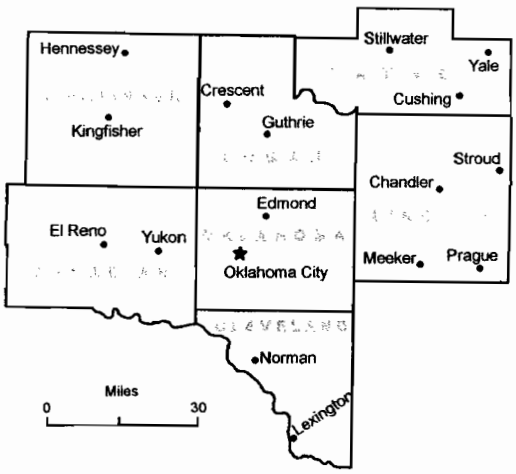


Crescent Property Warranting Further Study

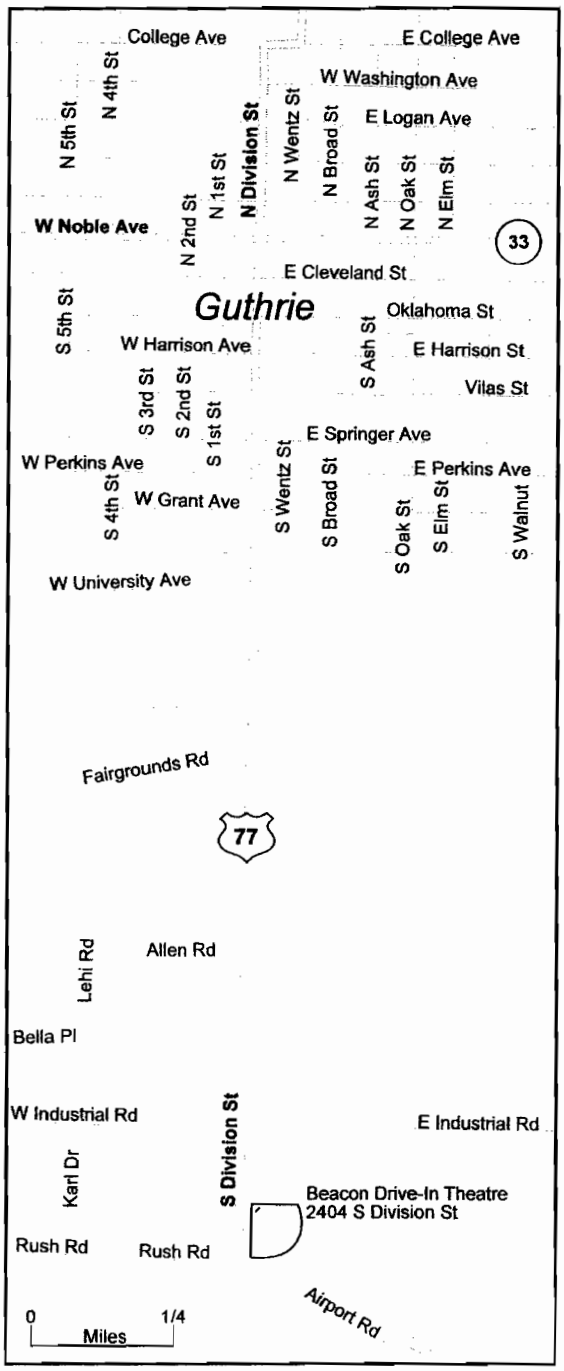


Portion of Downtown Crescent

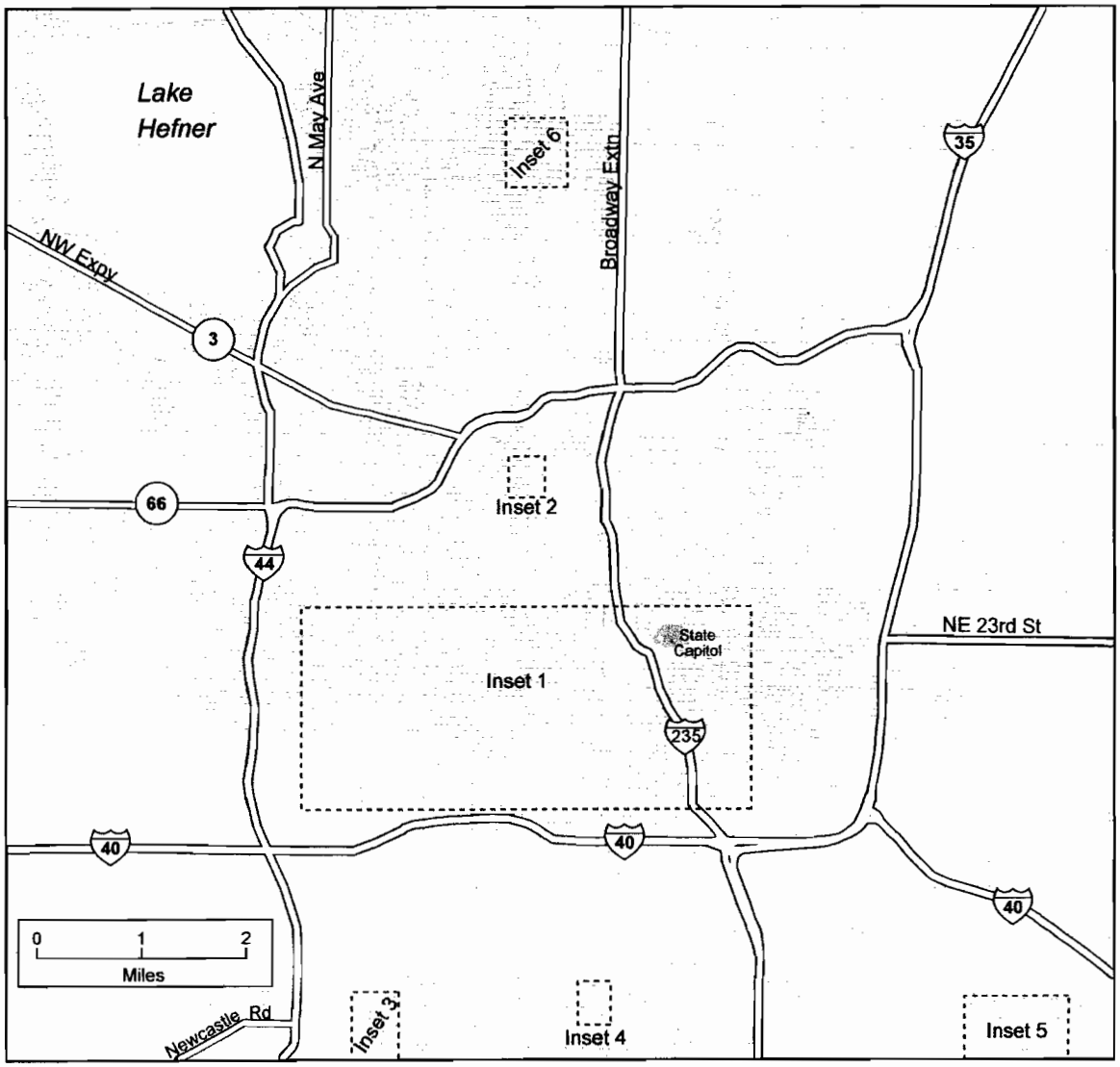
Study Towns



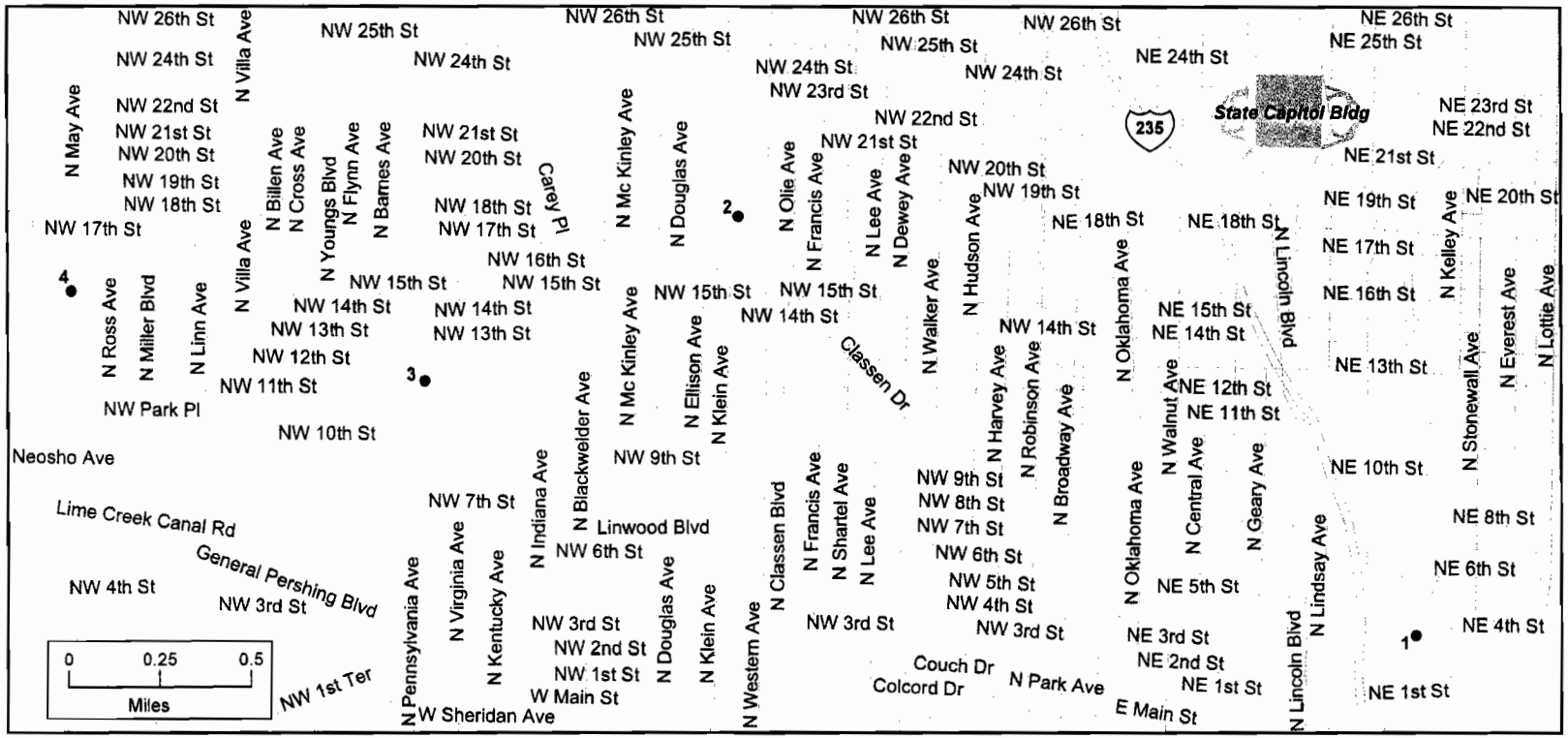
Guthrie-Area Property Warranting Further Study



Key to Inset Maps for the Oklahoma City Area



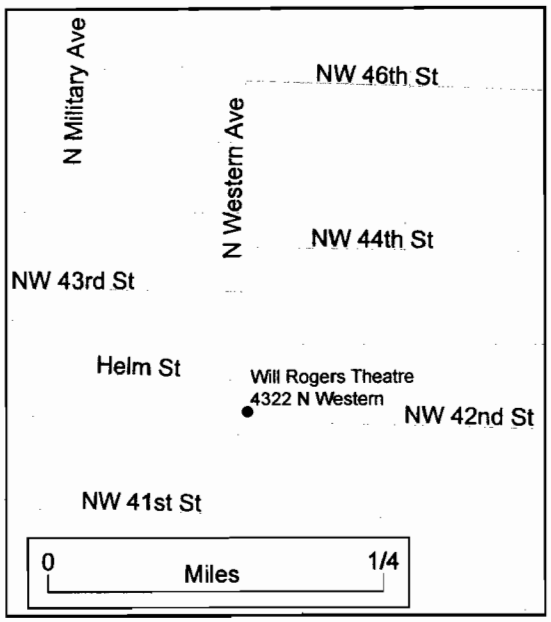
Oklahoma City Properties Warranting Further Study



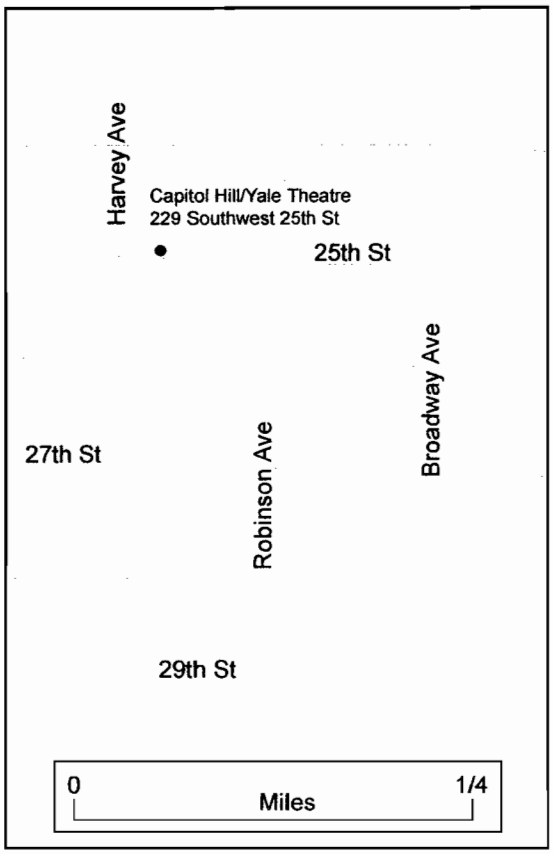
Inset 1 - Portion of Central Oklahoma City

Key to Properties

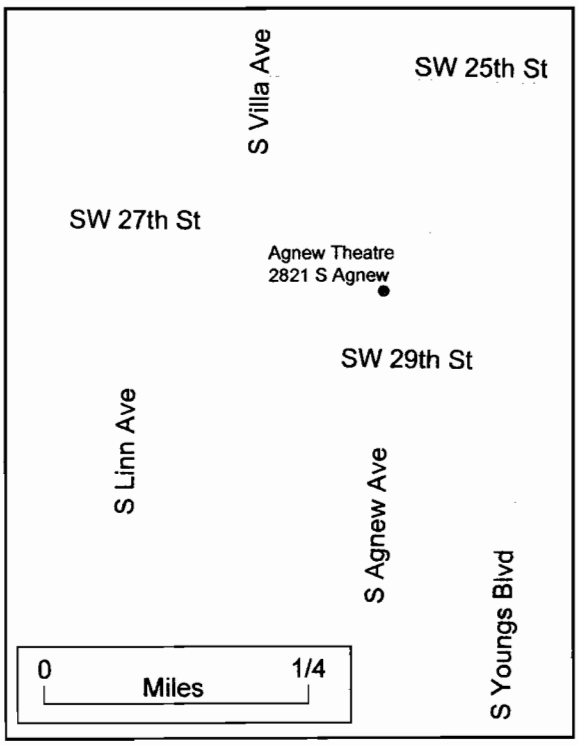
1. Jewel Theatre - 904 NE 4th St
2. Victoria Theatre - 1901 N Classen Blvd
3. Penn Theatre - 1212 N Pennsylvania Ave
4. May Theatre - 1515 N May Ave



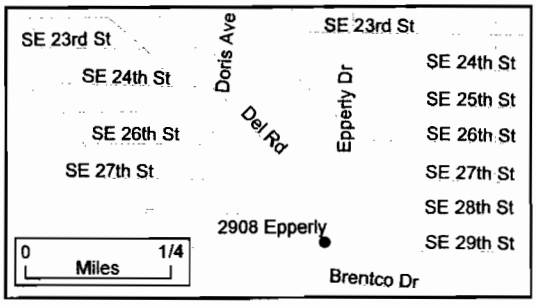
Inset 2 - Portion of North Central Oklahoma City



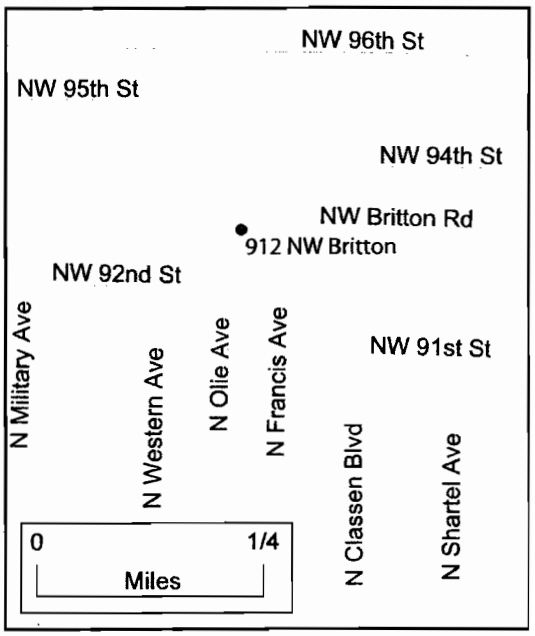
Inset 4 - Portion of South Central Oklahoma City



Inset 3 - Portion of Southwest Oklahoma City

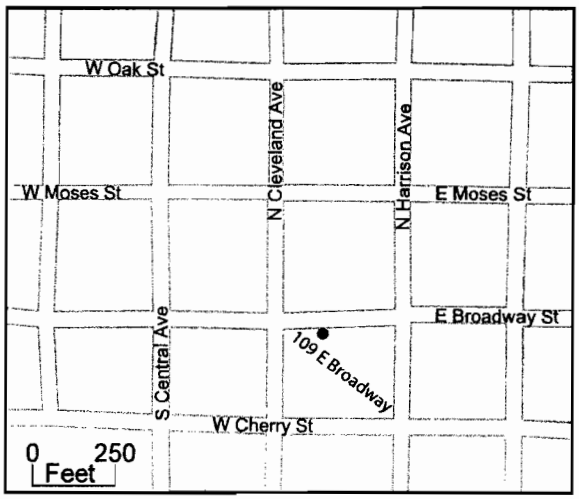


Inset 5 - Portion of Southeast Oklahoma City (Del City)



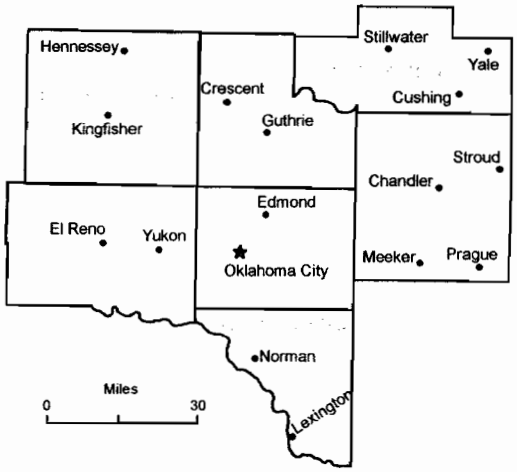
Inset 6 - Portion of Northwestern Oklahoma City

Cushing Property Warranting Further Study

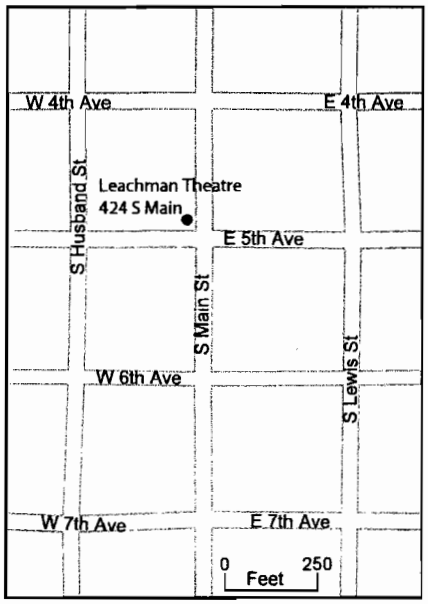


Portion of Downtown Cushing

Study Towns

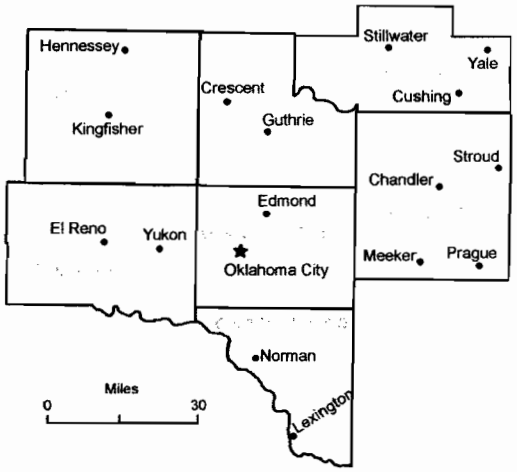


Stillwater Property Warranting Further Study



Portion of Downtown Stillwater

Study Towns



XII. THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF PROPERTIES THAT WARRANT FURTHER STUDY

1. **El Reno Theatre** (104-108 North Bickford Avenue, El Reno). Built circa 1905.

This is a two-story brick-clad building in the Commercial style. The brick has been white-washed and decorative details are minimal. There is some metal infill above the awning. This was the El Reno opera house circa 1908.

2. **Kerfoot Bros./I. Jalonik Building/Jewel Theatre** (107-109 North Bickford Avenue, El Reno). Built in 1936.

This is a two-story Italianate style building in brick with an iron clad façade. A good deal of the upper half of the building is original except that windows have wood infill and some details have been painted grey. The cornice is decorated with florets. Eight engaged classical columns are set in pairs beside the windows on the second floor. The building originally held two businesses but has housed various commercial enterprises over the years. In particular, it was a movie theater from about 1918 to mid 1940s. The top floor was historically apartment space.

3. **El Caro/Centre Theatre** (110-112 South Bickford Avenue, El Reno). Built circa 1935.

This is a two-story building in the Moderne style. The exterior walls of the front (east) elevation are covered with a raked stucco finish. Most of the front panels are beige except for a vertical strip of white panels just to the right of center and above the recessed

entrance area. These white panels extend above the roofline to make a modest parapet. A curved marquee with two signboards projects over the entrance. Glass display cases flank the entrance.

4. **Ortman Theatre** (110 North Main Street, Hennessey). Built circa 1920.

This is a one-story brick-clad Commercial style building with the faintest hints of Art Deco styling. Although the theater lacks a marquee, there is an awning and the woodwork over the ticket booth is studded with small light bulbs to create the effect of an arcade.

5. **Pappe Building/Electric Theatre** (204 North Main Street, Kingfisher). Built circa 1900.

This is a two-story building in the Commercial style. The first floor façade has been altered and the original brick cladding has been replaced with ceramic tile. The entrance is deeply recessed and the door is framed with sidelights. This building was originally part of Kingfisher's Grand Opera House. It has long been associated with entertainment and functioned as a movie theater from the early 1900s into the 1930s, and possibly longer.

6. **Barton Building** (312 West Main Street, Stroud). Built in 1920.

This is a two-story Commercial style building with buff brick cladding. The cladding is enhanced with darker bricks that mark the lintels and sills of the windows. The first floor has been altered with new windows, columns, and some wood framing around the windows. This was a theater from about 1931 to 1956, and possibly longer.

7. **113-117 South Grand Avenue, Crescent.** Built in 1927.

This is a one-story brick-clad Art Deco building. The façade is symmetrical, with a wide middle section and two narrower side sections. Each section has a separate awning. The windows are not original. This was built on the site of the opera house. It was a movie theater in the 1920s for an indeterminate period of time.

8. **Beacon Drive-In** (2404 South Division Street, Guthrie). Built in 1950.

This is a drive-in movie theater with an enlarged, wide screen. It has ramps for approximately 360 vehicles, speakers that can be mounted on vehicle windows, as well as a stand alone ticket booth and projector room. This theater is still in use.

9. **Capitol Hill/Yale Theatre** (229 Southwest 25th Street, Oklahoma City). Built in 1922.

This is a two-story brick and stucco clad theater in the Moderne style. It has a marquee of shaped metal panels. Neon tube lighting emphasizes horizontal and vertical lines of sign/awning and outlines letters. On the central vertical sign are letters spelling

"Yale." The horizontal panels have what appears to have been a backlit neon sign. There are two entry doors with a ticket booth in between them. The brickwork on the façade is not original.

10. **Jewel Theatre** (904 Northeast 4th Street, Oklahoma City). Built in 1931.

This is a brick Art Deco theater with a two-story façade, a full-width arched parapet, and small corner towers. The name of the theater appears in neon on a small sign that was added at a later date, possibly in the late 1940s or 50s. The name also appears in cast concrete on the façade. Some windows have been boarded up. This building is significant because of its association with segregation. In particular, this theater served the African American community.

11. **Ritz Theatre** (912 Northwest Britton Road, Oklahoma City). Built circa 1955.

This is a two-story movie theater that bears some influence of Moderne styling in the smooth stucco wall surfaces on the second floor. The marquee projects across the sidewalk and is prominent even though it is not a full-width marquee. The entrance is recessed in mirror image to the marquee above. The marquee is topped with a rather modest vertical sign with the name of the theater. The curves on the sign echo the rounded corners on the parapet.

12. **Penn Theatre** (1212 North Pennsylvania Avenue, Oklahoma City). Built in 1940.

This is a two-story Moderne style theatre with stucco cladding. There is a prominent center awning on the first floor and a parapet wall in the center. Three sizable glass block windows mark the second floor and are flanked by narrow casement windows. There are octagonal medallions above the casement windows. The ticket booth is curved, projects slightly, and is located between two entry doors.

13. **May Theatre** (1515 North May Avenue, Oklahoma City). Built circa 1945.

This is a two story brick-clad movie theater built in the 1940s. It reflects the Modern Movement but has some Art Deco influences particularly on the marquee and sign board. The entrance is deeply recessed and leads into a concession area/lobby. The vertical sign rises about 1.5 stories above the entrance. The word "May" is outlined in neon but the words "antique mall" have been painted on the rest of the marquee. There is a large section of white-washed bricks adjacent to the entrance. Some of the brickwork at the front entrance is not original.

14. **Victoria Theatre** (1901 North Classen Boulevard, Oklahoma City). Built in 1928.

This is a building in the Late Gothic Revival style. The walls have stucco-covered brick cladding. The building possesses many Gothic details including small towers, pointed-arch windows, checkerboard parapet wall, and floral designs at the points of the arches. The façade includes a deep, arched entrance and adjacent window-front spaces

now housing various commercial entities. The original doors and windows have been replaced. The back of the building housed the theater, which appears to be two stories with a raised basement.

15. **Agnew Theatre** (2821 Agnew Avenue, Oklahoma City). Built circa 1948.

This theater is designed in the Moderne style. It includes a one-story theater lobby and two-story theater auditorium. The entrance to the theater lobby is recessed within a curved (concave) space. The ticket booth is part of a tall vertical signpost that extends from ground level through the marquee to approximately three stories in height. The sign post and marquee have been altered. Cladding around the lobby also appears new, and the theater space has been converted into a restaurant.

16. **Will Rogers Theatre** (4322 North Western Avenue, Oklahoma City). Built circa 1946.

This is a two-story brick movie theater designed in the Moderne style. It has a vertical neon sign and a marquee with rounded corners that extends out over a recessed entry. The theater is distinguished by casement windows, some of which mark the building corners. There is new tilework at the entrance, and the building now houses a restaurant.

17. **Del City Theatre** (2908 Epperly Drive, Oklahoma City). Built circa 1950.

This is a two-story Commercial style building with stone cladding. The façade is symmetrical with a parapet above the center portion of the building. A large marquee stretches the full-width of the building and has been altered to carry the name of the business in the building (Bob Woods Del City Music). There have been some alterations to the first floor windows and doors. This building operated as a movie theater through the 1960s (dates approximate).

18. **109 East Broadway Street, Cushing.** Built circa 1920.

This is a two-story Commercial style building with Spanish influences including a stucco façade and tiled pent roof. The pent roof is supported with triangular brackets. The first floor has been altered and consists of a series of large, fixed pane display windows. The building was a movie theater during the 1930s, for an unknown amount of time.

19. **Leachman Theatre** (424 South Main Street, Stillwater). Built in 1946-47.

This is a two-story, flat-roofed, brick, Art Deco style theater building. Features include fixed glass block windows, continuous header sills, and concrete coping at roofline. The building retains the original marquee and ticket booth. The vertical sign has been altered some to identify the furniture store now housed in the building. Two sign boards abut the vertical sign for the theater. Above the ticket booth on the second floor is some office space (where the Carmike Cinema District Office was located for a time

about 1987-1988). The walls here are distinguished by hung windows, in sets of three or four windows. Portions of the first floor have wood infill.

XIII. LIST OF PROPERTIES THAT DO NOT WARRANT FURTHER STUDY

Canadian County

1. Woods/Royal Theatre
   114 North Bickford Avenue
   El Reno, OK

2. 207 South Bickford Avenue
   El Reno, OK

3. People's Theatre
   200-204 North Rock Island Avenue
   El Reno, OK

4. Squaw Drive-In
   2430 West Sunset Drive
   El Reno, OK

5. 442 West Main Street
   Yukon, OK

6. 457 West Main Street
   Yukon, OK

7. 528 West Main Street
   Yukon, OK

Cleveland County

8. 123-125 East Main Street
   Norman, OK

9. Boomer Theatre
   765 South Asp Avenue
   Norman, OK

10. 114 East Broadway Avenue
    Lexington, OK

Kingfisher County

11. 89er Theatre
    113-115 North Main Street
    Kingfisher, OK

12. Thomas Theatre
    117 North Main Street
    Kingfisher, OK

Lincoln County

13. 919 South Manvel Avenue
    Chandler, OK

14. 708 West Main Street
    Meeker, OK

15. 407 West Main Street
    Stroud, OK

16. 921 North Broadway Avenue
    Prague, OK

Oklahoma County

17. Uptown Theatre
    1210-1212 North Hudson Avenue
    Oklahoma City, OK

18. Chieftain Theatre
    3450 Southwest 29th Street
    Oklahoma City, OK

19. Winchester Drive-In Theatre
    6930 South Western Avenue
    Oklahoma City, OK

20. Broncho Theatre
    1 South Broadway Avenue
    Edmond, OK

21. Gem Theatre
    17 South Broadway Avenue
    Edmond, OK

Payne County

22. Cushing Community Theatre
    105-107 East Broadway Street
    Cushing, OK

23. Empress Theatre
    122 East Broadway Street
    Cushing, OK

24. 110 West Broadway Street
    Cushing, OK

25. Satellite Twin Theatres
    1126 West Hall of Fame Avenue
    Stillwater, OK

26. Campus Theatre
    224 South Knoblock Street
    Stillwater, OK

27. Aggie Theatre
    619-621 South Main Street
    Stillwater, OK

28. Mecca Theatre
    716 South Main Street
    Stillwater, OK

29. Camera Theatre
    719 South Main Street
    Stillwater, OK

30. 915 South Main Street
    Stillwater, OK

31. 106 South Main Street
    Yale, OK

32. 112 North Main Street
Yale, OK

XIV. HISTORIC CONTEXT

Background

The Kinetoscope, an invention by Thomas Edison, constitutes the first commercially-designed machine for showing moving pictures.[1] This is the machine that gave rise to the term "peep shows," since viewers had to look through a peephole to see the action. Kinetoscopes quickly became accoutrements of downtown businesses including drugstores and hotels. The Kinetoscope remained popular from 1894 to 1900, until its improved version, the Vitascope prevailed. The primary difference between these was that the Kinetoscope was designed for an audience of one while the Vitascope used a screen and a projection system.[2]

The rise of movies also occurred in conjunction with the evolution of vaudeville entertainment. Vaudeville shows were variety shows usually organized in several acts consisting of comedy routines, music, dancing, pantomime, acrobatic performances, magic shows, and more. Vaudeville entertainment emerged in the 1880s and became a popular form of family entertainment. The development of vaudeville circuits, where multiple entertainment houses in different towns and cities were owned or controlled by a single individual or firm, was made possible by the country's expanding transportation network. Those towns with access to the railroad were more likely to become a stop on one of the vaudeville circuits. In small towns across the country "opera houses" were some of the earliest facilities providing entertainment for the community. The first opera

[1] Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre, Starring S. Charles Lee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 16.
[2] Ibid., 17.

house in Oklahoma City was the Overholser Opera House, completed in 1890.[3] A new, larger facility opened in 1903 at 217 West Grand (Sheridan). It marked the start of a vaudeville circuit that stretched from Oklahoma City across Indian Territory to places like Vinita, Tulsa, South McAlester and Ardmore.[4]

Before the end of the nineteenth century, vaudeville producers had begun to incorporate moving pictures in their shows.[5] By the close of the first decade of the twentieth century, movies had supplanted vaudeville as a favored form of entertainment. A number of early movie theaters grew out of readapted vaudeville houses, but many more became "storefront theaters." The term refers to the use of vacant downtown buildings as improvised theaters where some seating was provided and the movie was projected on a sheet of muslin.[6] The nickelodeon became the spruced up storefront theater that offered movies from morning till midnight at a nickel apiece.[7] The nickelodeon was the creation of John P. Harris and Harry Davis, two Pittsburgh businessmen who anticipated the profitability of the movies. Around the end of the first decade of the twentieth century there were, by one estimate, some 10,000 nickelodeons in the United States.[8] If a building was not available, or summer heat made indoor movie-viewing too unbearable, open air theaters or "air domes" were used. Because of their downtown location, air domes resemble commercial structures except that they lack a roof. These theaters often show up on Sanborn maps from the early twentieth century.

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[3] Roy P. Stewart, *Born Grown: An Oklahoma City History* (Oklahoma City: Fidelity Bank, 1974), 88.
[4] Ibid., 89.
[5] Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 17.
[6] Ibid., 22.
[7] Ibid., 23.
[8] Karal Ann Marling, "Fantasies in Dark Places: The Cultural Geography of the American Movie Palace," in *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 12.

Although air domes were for outdoor movie viewing, they varied greatly from one to another. Some incorporated sloped seating and screens protected from the elements, but others did not.

It is difficult to overestimate the impact of the nickelodeon. Arguably, it created a movie-going public and paved the way for the emergence of the longer, feature films. The era of silent feature films lasted from about 1907 to 1927. During this time Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford emerged as some of the first move stars. Architecturally, many of the grand "movie palaces" were built during this period. Some of the larger movie palaces seated as many as 5,000 people. The success of the movie palace parallels the rise of consumer culture in the United States and the development of more sophisticated advertising campaigns.

In New York City, S. L. Rothafel—"Roxy"—directed the designs of the Strand, Rialto, and Rivoli theaters on Broadway. On the one hand these buildings were extravagant, boasting such ornamentation as terra cotta decoration, gold-leafed designs, immense chandeliers, and plush carpet. The names of these picture palaces—Ritz, Palace, Majestic, Jewel, Gem—echoed their extravagance.[9] This quality was perhaps nowhere better expressed than in the wave of exoticism that influenced movie palace design in the 1920s. In Hollywood, Sid Grauman's Egyptian (1922) and Chinese (1927) theaters epitomized this trend. John Eberson's "atmospheric" theaters also contributed to the thrill of the movie palace. Atmospheric theaters were designed such that the interior resembled a natural setting like a garden with clouds and stars above. On the other hand, these same

[9] Marling, "Fantasies in Dark Places," 8.

theaters have been described as "classless."[10] They were as much gathering places for the community and vibrant social spaces as they were places of escape.

The Depression ended the heyday of the movie palace and curtailed movie-going. The movie palaces began to give way to numerous smaller theaters in urban and suburban residential districts, signaling a change in the geography of movie theaters away from city centers that would continue after the Second World War. Stylistically, Art Deco and Moderne influences substantially modified the look of movie theaters. Architect and theater expert Maggie Valentine draws a comparison between the designs of cars and theaters in the 1930s:

> Both the theatres and the cars parked in front of them were marked by a change from boxy and static forms with delicate detailing to horizontal configurations with broad sweeping lines.[11]

Prior to the development of television, movie theaters supplemented radios and newspapers in providing news reports. The addition of 10-minute newsreels, usually shown before the scheduled movie, had become commonplace in theaters across the United States by the 1930s. During the Second World War these newsreels provided information about the war and supported the war effort. For a time, some theaters showed only newsreels. These could usually be identified at a glance because they often incorporated a globe somewhere in the exterior design of the theater—on the façade or as part of the marquee.[12] It is not clear if any theaters dedicated to newsreel showing operated in Oklahoma.

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[10] Marling, "Fantasies in Dark Places," 18.
[11] Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 118.
[12] Ibid., 135.

According to estimates provided in the *1960 Year Book of Motion Pictures,* movie attendance peaked in the years following WWII. From 1946 to 1948, the average weekly attendance at US theaters hovered at about 90 million people.[13] It has never been higher.[14] In the 1970s the average weekly attendance figure dropped below 20 million. In spite of the decline in attendance, the amount of money grossed by box offices increased steadily until 1984.[15] Indeed most of the profit now came not from the cost of the ticket, but from the sale of popcorn, soft drinks, and candy. [16] The success of theaters has gone hand-in-hand with changing habits of consumption.

Drive-In Theaters

The first drive-in theater opened in New Jersey in 1933 but drive-ins did not become popular until after the Second World War. Few drive-ins were built until the latter part of the 1940s when there was a surge in their construction. Between 1947 and 1950 the number of drive-ins quadrupled (see Table 1).[17] Within another decade their numbers had tripled, rising to 4,768 by January 1960.[18] The popularity of drive-ins is commonly attributed to the fact that they provided entertainment the entire family could enjoy. Drive-ins could accommodate young children in ways that indoor theaters could not, providing them additional play space. As Leibs observes, "Drive-ins would become

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[13] *1960 Year Book of Motion Pictures*. 42nd Annual Edition (New York: The Film Daily, 1960), 105.
[14] Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, Appendix A.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 176.
[17] Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, Appendix A. Citing statistics from the 1949-1950 *Theatre Catalog*, Leibs reports that some 1,700 drive-ins had been built by 1950 (1985, 157).
[18] *1960 Year Book of Motion Pictures*, 107. According to Leibs (1985, 164) drive-ins reached their greatest number in 1958. This is not supported by statistics in the *1960 Year Book of Motion Pictures.*

wildly popular because they provided a place for moviegoers to engage in activities other than watching the show."[19]

Table 1.

Drive-In Theaters in the U.S., 1944-1950

Year	Number of Drive-Ins[20]
1944	96
1945	102
1946	300
1947	548
1948	820
1949	1,203
1950	2,202

Oklahoma's experience with drive-in theaters generally paralleled this trend. Although it is not clear when the first drive-in was built in Oklahoma, there is some evidence to suggest that drive-ins were in operation in Oklahoma City by 1947.[21] For the state as a whole, much of the growth in the number of drive-ins appears to have been concentrated in a seven-year period from 1948-1954. According to one estimate the number of drive-ins in the state grew from 29 in 1948 to 95 in 1954, but had dropped to

[19] Chester H. Leibs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 159.
[20] *1960 Year Book of Motion Pictures,* 1057; Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, Appendix A.
[21] See the discussion that follows on Oklahoma County.

about 60 in the late 1970s.[22] The latest count indicates that there are only eight drive-ins still operating in Oklahoma today.[23]

The architecture of drive-ins was simple. They required a visible sign to advertise the theater, a screen tower, projection booth, ticket office, speakers, and ramped spaces to accommodate parked cars. Some of the largest drive-ins could accommodate 2,000 to 3,000 cars. Initially, loudspeakers were placed near the screen but this design gave way to the use of speakers that viewers could hang on the car window. Now the movie sound is broadcast via an FM signal that viewers pick up on their car radio, enabling stereo sound.

Diverse forces contributed to the decline of drive-ins. The most significant factor involved expanding urban areas. Drive-ins were essentially consumed by development. Shopping malls and subdivisions represented more cost-effective uses of the land that drive-ins occupied. Demographic changes, specifically the end of the baby boom, factored in the decline of the drive-in. Changing tastes were also an issue as drive-ins did not have the same appeal they once had and were increasingly challenged by the popularity of video rentals. Beginning in the 1970s, drive-ins disappeared steadily and by the 1990s fewer than 1,000 remained in the country.[24]

Ever since the days of the grand movie palaces, theater design has tended to strive for efficiency and, arguably, minimalism. The Art Deco and Moderne styling evoked this, whether on indoor or drive-in theaters. Perhaps the epitome of efficiency can be found in the multiplex theaters. These are theaters that contain multiple screens. The rise of the

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[22] See the following Web site, http://www.driveintheater.com/drivlist.htm. Unfortunately, no source is provided for these figures.
[23] Ron Stahl, "Drive-Ins Survive Despite Decline", *The Oklahoman*, August 21, 2005.
[24] Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, Appendix A.

multiplex dates to the 1960s when the first four-screen theater opened.[25] During the 1970s and 1980s, many theaters were "twinned." That is, single screen theaters were converted into two screens in order to show more movies. The trend continues. In the 1990s megaplexes—theaters with sixteen or more screens—were built. Some theaters, like the one at Ontario Mills Mall in Ontario, California, have thirty screens. With efficiency has come a new form of monstrousness.

The Oklahoma Experience

Canadian County

El Reno

El Reno has enjoyed a curious relationship with movie-making and movie theaters. In fact, the town has served as the setting for scenes in a number of movies. El Reno appears in the 1951 movie "Al Jennings of Oklahoma," based on the life of the lawyer turned bank robber who lived in the town in the 1890s.[26] More recently, portions of the 1988 movie "Rain Man" and the 2005 movie "Elizabethtown" were filmed in El Reno.

The first opera house in El Reno dates to about 1899 and appears to have occupied the second floor of a building located at 105-107 South Rock Island Avenue.[27] Curiously, none of the city directories for El Reno mention the opera house. This may have something to do with the fact that in its initial location on South Rock Island

[25] Ibid., 182.
[26] *A History of Canadian County, Oklahoma* (El Reno, OK: Canadian County History Book Association, 1991), 98.
[27] *A History of Canadian County*, 91. See also the Sanborn Fire Insurance map of 1901.

Avenue it shared building space with the El Reno Liquor Company, [28] and also because some of the early vaudeville was not considered "family entertainment." Nevertheless, this opera house closed a few years after the turn of the century, moved to a new location at 104-108 North Bickford Avenue, and was enlarged. As indicated by the street address, the opera house spanned nearly three city lots on Bickford, making it a significant landmark. After 1908 it was known as the El Reno Theater and, with a seating capacity of 1,000 guests, was the largest indoor theater in town.[29]

Although the 1908 Sanborn map indicates a "theatre moving picture machine" at 105 South Bickford Avenue, it appears short-lived and is not listed in the city directories.[30] In addition to the El Reno Theater, the 1909 city directory lists four other movie houses: the Bijou Theatre with seating capacity of 500 at 114 North Bickford Avenue; Jones' Airdome with a seating capacity of 1,500 at 220 West Wade Street; the Novelty Theatre with a seating capacity of 260 at 116 South Rock Island Avenue; and the Palace Theatre with a seating capacity of 175 at 111 North Rock Island Avenue.[31] With a seating capacity in excess of 3,400 and a population of about 7,800 people, El Reno's theaters could provide entertainment for over 40% of the city's residents.

The construction of the People's Theater in 1910 at 200-204 North Rock Island Avenue added another sizable theater to the downtown. Close by, a fenced air dome

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[28] R. M. Wright, *Wright's El Reno City Directory 1901-1902* (El Reno: American Publishing Company, 1901).
[29] Only Jones' Airdome could seat more people (approximately 1,500). See the *El Reno City Directory 1909* (Sioux City, IA: R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1909).
[30] The 1913 Sanborn map lists this lot as vacant.
[31] *El Reno City Directory 1909* (Sioux City, IA: R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1909).

theater stretched across four lots at 114 West Woodson Street. Within a decade the People's Theater had been converted into a garage, the space occupied by the air dome was targeted for a lumber yard, and the building that once housed El Reno Theater had become a furniture store.

By 1918 the Jewel Theatre had opened in the Kerfoot Brothers Building at 107 North Bickford Avenue.[32] The Jewel Theatre was superseded by the Empress Theatre about 1928, also in the Kerfoot Brothers Building. This building appears to have been continually used as a theater from 1918 until the early 1940s. By 1946 the Empress had closed and the Kerfoot Brothers Building housed the El Reno Bakery.

Most of the other theaters to have operated in El Reno were located on either Rock Island Avenue or Bickford Avenue.[33] In 1928 the Woods Theatre was located at 114 North Bickford Avenue. Two years later it was replaced by the Royal Theatre, which remained in operation until about 1951. The Royal Theatre was a segregated theater. Some of the seats near the noisy projector were specifically designated for El Reno's African American residents.[34] The building at 206-208 South Rock Island Avenue housed the Criterion Theatre from 1928 to about 1941 when it became the Rocket Theatre. This theater appears to have stayed in business through the Second World War. It finally closed its doors about 1960.[35] The building has since been torn down and replaced by a parking lot.

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[32] *Page's City Directory, El Reno, Oklahoma*, 1918.
[33] Although the 1920 Sanborn map of El Reno shows a movie theater at 207 South Bickford Avenue, none of the city directories does.
[34] *A History of Canadian County*, 117.
[35] This information on the Woods and Royal Theatres is based on the various city directories for El Reno.

The El Caro Theatre opened for business about 1938 at 110-112 South Bickford Avenue. By 1946 it had become the Centre Theatre, and by 1978 it was known as the Cinema Theatre. For approximately 50 years the building at 110-112 South Bickford was used as a theater. The Cinema Theatre closed about 1993.[36] At the time of this project it was for sale.

El Reno's first and only drive-in theater was the Squaw Drive-In located at 2430 West Sunset Drive.[37] It opened sometime after WWII and could accommodate up to 400 cars.[38] Remnants of the drive-in still exist, including the brick structure that supports the corrugated metal screen; however, a sports bar has since been built on the property.

Yukon

In Yukon, the Spencer Opera House provided variety entertainment for local residents in the early 1900s. It was located at 505 West Main Street, beside the bank that stood on the northwest corner of Fifth and Main streets. The opera house appears on the Sanborn map of 1904 but the 1909 Sanborn map shows the building as "vacant." By about 1913 another theater was in business across the street at 442 West Main but it may not have lasted for even a decade. From about 1920 up to WWII another theater appears to have been located at 457 West Main Street.

After the war it seems Yukon had one theater, but neither the name nor the address are definitively given. Some phone books for Yukon from the 1950s into the

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[36] This information on the El Caro, Centre, and Cinema Theatres is based on the various city directories for El Reno.

[37] The drive-in may have been renamed to El Reno Drive-In. See *A History of Canadian County, Oklahoma*, 97. It is possible to discern the name "El Reno" in the faded paint on the back side of the drive-in screen.

early 1960s sometimes refer to "Larry Theatre" while others refer to a "Yukon Theatre." Addresses are variably given as 512 or 522 West Main. It seems most likely that the theater was at 522 West Main because that is where the Capri Theatre was located when it opened in about 1965. This theater was destroyed by fire in 1970.[39] Anecdotal evidence provided by one long-time Yukon resident indicates that movies were also shown at 528 West Main Street in the 1960s.

Cleveland County

Moore

The town of Moore is, for the first seventy years or so of its existence, sometimes described as a sleepy town.[40] The 1920 census, for example, recorded just over 200 residents living in the town. Sometime between 1950 and 1960 the town's population surpassed 1,700 people. Then, in a remarkable growth spurt between 1960 and 1970, Moore's population increased more than tenfold, climbing over 18,000 people by the time of the 1970 census.

This demographic picture, in particular the small population size for much of its history, helps explain the paucity of theaters in Moore. The 1922 Sanborn map of Moore is the first to document a theater—an air dome theater at 244 Main Street, the sixth lot west of Broadway on the south side of the street. Some evidence indicates that another

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[38] *A History of Canadian County*, 97. This source states that the drive-in opened September 11, 1948. The 1958 city directory, however, is the first to list the drive-in.
[39] Sara Nee Ball, *Yukon's First One Hundred Years: Yukon, Oklahoma Centennial, 1891-1991* (Yukon, OK: United Color Press, 1990), 17.
[40] Bonnie Speer, *Cleveland County: Pride of the Promised Land: An Illustrated History* (Norman: author, 1988), 72; 77.

theater, the Moore Theatre, operated at 220 North Broadway in 1950.[41] It is not, however, being used as a theater today.

Lexington

Established as a result of the 1889 land run, Lexington grew more rapidly than Moore and initially functioned as a hub for the southern portion of Cleveland County. The population of Lexington climbed over 800 people at the turn of the twentieth century. By the time of the 1920 census nearly 1,000 people lived there. The 1926 Sanborn map of Lexington shows one movie house on East Broadway. Rivest's List indicates that the Mystery Theatre operated in Lexington in 1935 and that the Sigmond Theatre operated from 1940 to 1955.[42] Since the dates of operation of these theaters are not overlapping, it is possible that both theaters were housed in the same building, which still stands (but is not presently in use), at 114 East Broadway. Additional research is needed to confirm these details. In later decades, Lexington was affected by the growth of Purcell, which became a stronger magnet for the movie-going public.

[41] See Rivest's List at http://www.movie-theatre.org/.
[42] Ibid.

Norman

As the largest town in Cleveland County, Norman has long been able to support the entertainment industry. About 1890, shortly after the land run, the Seawell Opera House opened.[43] It stood at 111-113 East Main Street, occupied two lots, and was the first three-story building in the downtown.[44] Sanborn maps indicate that by 1918 the opera house had evolved into a movie theater, and in the 1920s was converted into a hotel.

In addition to the opera house, Norman also possessed several nickelodeons. Some of these were short-lived while others evolved into more enduring movie theaters. For example, one nickelodeon operated at 123 East Main Street between about 1908 and 1917, after which it was used as a dance hall/meeting hall. The building at 108 East Main Street, home to an electric theater about 1910, became the Varsity Theatre in the late 1930s.[45] It remained in operation until 1954. For roughly a decade between about 1905 and 1915, Norman residents could spend summer evenings taking in a picture show at the air dome at 118 East Main Street.

More than any other street, Main Street was the focal point for movie theaters, many of which opened during the 1920s and 30s. One of these was the Billings Theatre, located at 107 East Main Street. This theatre opened about 1925 and operated for roughly a decade. The Oklahoma Theatre opened at about the same time and was located at 209 East Main Street. However, it survived until 1954, much longer than the Billings Theatre. If the Sanborn maps are correct, then this would appear to be an unusual example of a bank building that became used as a movie theater. University Theatre occupied the

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[43] Speer, *Cleveland County*, 49.
[44] Ibid., 49.
[45] *Norman Cross Index Directory,* Dec. 15, 1938.

beautiful Art Deco style building at 225-227 East Main from about 1925 to 1959. Still, Norman's most exquisite theater was undoubtedly the Sooner Theatre located at 101-103 East Main Street, built by Harold Gimeno. This theater opened in 1929 and was listed in the National Register in 1978. Though it does not show films the theater does host live performances and remains an important anchor for the downtown business district.

Two other theaters were built near campus. In the early 1930s the Campus Theatre opened at 784 Asp Avenue. In the 1940s it became the Boomer Theatre and about 1948 appears to have moved into a larger building at 765 South Asp Avenue. This building also housed an office of the Griffith Amusement Company, a film distribution company. Between 1941 and 1951 the Griffith Amusement Company also maintained an office adjacent to the Varsity Theatre at 108 ½ East Main Street. This gives one indication of the importance of Norman as a center of film distribution. Indeed, the Boomer Theatre survived as a movie theater into the late 1970s. By about 1978 it had become the "Boomer Music Hall," a venue for live concerts. In 1987 the theater was substantially remodeled by Harold's Stores, Inc.

Two drive-in theaters were built in Norman and both appear to have opened about 1951. The Rancho Drive-In was located at 1122 East Alameda Street while the Riverside Drive-In was located at 1824 Twenty-Fourth Avenue Southwest. It closed about 1980. Within another two years the Rancho Drive-In had also closed. Both sites have since been transformed by more intensive commercial development.

Kingfisher County

Kingfisher

For the better part of the 1890s Kingfisher had an opera house. It occupied the second floor of a building at 114-116 East Roberts Avenue in the "Opera House Block" and was adjacent to the Kingfisher Hotel. By 1901 a new facility had opened. It was later called the "Grand Opera House" and was located on the second floor at the back of the Pappe Building at 202-204 North Main Street.[46] If the Sanborn maps are correct, the Electric Theater occupied the first floor of 204 North Main Street, providing an interesting record of the rise of nickelodeons and their displacement of live entertainment.[47] Indeed, by 1915 this movie theater had been enlarged, encroaching on the space of the former opera house. This movie theater lasted into the 1930s, and possibly later.[48]

For a few years between about 1909 and 1913 an air dome theater operated at 316 South Main Street. From the 1920s into the 1940s and possibly later, the Thomas Theater operated at 117 North Main Street.[49] This building was built after 1926. It still exists, though it is presently in use as a law office, and demonstrates the influence of Art Deco styling. Right beside this at 113-115 North Main Street was Kingfisher's most famous theater, the "89er Theatre." This theater was built in 1918 and was originally called the Temple Theatre. Interestingly, this theater also initially shared building space with the

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[46] This may also have become the "Cozy Theatre" referred by Ingle. See Jeremy A. Ingle, "From the 'Cozy' to the '89er': A Theater History," *Kingfisher Times and Free Press*, 19 April 2004.
[47] Details provided by Ingle 2004 suggest that this is the case. Ingle notes that the theater owner J. L. Carr combined performances with movies.
[48] The information provided by Ingle 2004 has some gaps. He mentions a Cozy Theatre, Lyric Theatre, and Electric Theatre. It is not clear where the Cozy and Lyric theatres were located. Ingle notes that the Lyric and Electric Theatres were replaced by the State Theatre.
[49] Ingle, "From the 'Cozy' to the '89er.'"

Masonic Temple, but in this case the meeting hall was on the second floor and the theater was on the first floor.[50] Later the Temple Theatre became the 89er Theatre. Until 2004 it was the oldest continually operating movie theater in Kingfisher.

On March 27, 2004 an electrical problem started a fire that destroyed the 89er Theatre leaving a sizable hole on Main Street. Plans are to fill the gap with a building designed in a style that fits with historic fabric of the downtown. In addition, Kingfisher has also built a new, three-screen movie theater just a block away at 304 North Main Street.

Kingfisher's drive-in theater was the Hi-Way 81 Drive-In located south of town. It has since been torn down and the site presently houses a car dealership.

Hennessey

Hennessey's theaters were confined to the 100-block of North Main Street. Within the first decade of the twentieth century Hennessey residents could watch movies at the Electric Theatre on 112 North Main. Then, in the nineteen teens moving pictures were shown in Hennessey at 105 North Main. Within another decade, however, this theater had been replaced by a roller rink.[51]

The longest-lasting theater in Hennessey was the Ortman Theatre at 110 North Main Street. It opened in the 1940s and closed about 1985. The Ortman Theatre was locally owned and operated, and sometime after the Second World War the lobby area was expanded to include space in the adjacent building at 112 North Main. The theater is reputed to have shown a Czech film every Thursday from about 1945 to 1968. In 1954

[50] Ingle, "From the 'Cozy' to the '89er.'"

the Ortman became one of the first theaters in Oklahoma to be converted into a Cinerama theater with a wider screen.

Lincoln County

Chandler

Downtown Chandler had at least two theaters by the 1930s. One occupied the lot at 818 South Manvel Avenue. This was probably the H&S Theatre which was built in 1926. The theater took its name from the first letter of the last names of the two men who partnered to build it, Colonel Richard Hoover and Gerald Stettmund. This theater may have operated into the 1990s, a period of about 70 years.[52]

Chandler's other theater was the Odeon Theatre, later the Dixie Theatre, at 919 South Manvel Avenue. Movies may have been shown at this site beginning about 1913.[53] This theater was opened by H. G. Stettmund (Gerald's father), but it went out of business about 1955.[54]

Stroud

As early as 1904 Stroud's opera house occupied the second floor of the two lots on the northwest corner of Second Avenue and Main Street. By 1910 it was joined by the "Cheap Theatre" located at 321 West Main Street. In 1916 picture shows were shown at 407 West Main Street. This building served as a movie theater into the 1950s, and

[51] See the 1915 and 1926 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps for Hennessey.
[52] See *Lincoln County, Oklahoma History* (Claremore, OK: Country Lane Press, 1988), 81.
[53] See the 1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance map for Chandler.

possibly more recently. Other, shorter-lived theaters that flourished in the 1920s were located at 312 and 406 West Main Street. No theaters operate in Stroud today, and the buildings that once were theaters have been completely remodeled.

Other Lincoln County Towns

Judging from Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, an incomplete source at best, the small towns of Agra, Carney, and Meridian do not appear to have had movie theaters. The 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance map for Davenport recorded one movie theater on Broadway, three lots north of Second Street. In the 1920s Meeker's theater occupied the lot at 708 Main Street. Prague's theater began on the second floor of the building at 921 North Broadway in the 1920s. Subsequently it expanded to occupy the entire building and operated for a number of years.

After 1910 Wellston's opera house occupied the second floor of the building on the southwest corner of Cedar Avenue and Second Street. This space was later used to show moving pictures in the 1920s. During the 1930s another theater operated across the street in the 500-block of Second Street. It is not clear what the names of these theaters were or how long these theaters were in operation.

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[54] *Lincoln County, Oklahoma History*, 81.

Logan County

Guthrie[55]

Guthrie's first opera house was built circa 1895 at 311-313 West Harrison Avenue, just a block from the railroad station in what would become the State Capitol Printing Office. Within three years a "Variety Theatre" had opened across the street from the opera house at 308-310 West Harrison. After the turn of the century, about 1903, it was known as the Standard Theatre. This theater remained in business a few more years but with the advent of motion pictures it was downsized and appears to have moved into a smaller, adjacent building at 123 South Second Street.

In 1899 a new opera house, known as Brooks Theatre, was built at 118-120 East Harrison Avenue. It stood adjacent to the Hotel Royal and hosted the first gathering of the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention in 1906. In the late 1920s Brooks Theatre became the Guthrie Theatre. It remained a part of Guthrie's cultural landscape until 1967 when it was demolished. A historical marker now identifies the site where this theater once stood.

The most prominent of Guthrie's theaters is the Pollard Theatre which is housed in the Pollard Building at 120-122 West Harrison Avenue. The building dates to 1901, but the theater was opened in 1919 and provided vaudeville entertainment. With the arrival of sound in the late 1920s the Pollard was renovated and became the Melba Theatre. The murals painted at the time of this renovation have been preserved. Since the late 1980s the Pollard/Melba has provided live theater entertainment. Although the kind

[55] Much of this information has been gleaned from a combination of sources including city directories, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, and conversations with Bob Powell, theater owner.

of entertainment has changed, the Pollard/Melba is the longest continually operating theater in Guthrie.

The 100-block of West Harrison became an initial focal point for Guthrie's movie-going public in the early 1900s. At one point four different theaters operated in this section of the block. From 1908 to 1930 moving pictures were shown at 111 West Harrison Avenue. This began as one of Guthrie's several early electric theaters. By about 1925 it was known as the Highland Theatre. According to notes provided by Guthrie resident and long-time theater owner, Bob Powell, the Highland Theatre was condemned and closed in 1930. At least one air dome theater was recorded on the 1908 Sanborn map of Guthrie. It was located across the street at 110-112 West Harrison Avenue and operated for about five or six years before being converted into a garage. Right beside the air dome, at 114 West Harrison, stood another theater. This may have been the Gem Theatre, which remained in operation into the 1930s. Two doors down from the Highland Theatre, at 115 West Harrison, was another theater that operated for a few years at the close of the first decade of the twentieth century.

In 1914, another electric theatre was located at 202 East Oklahoma, across the street from the Hotel Ione. It lasted for about a decade. Between1926 and 1948 the Cimarron Theatre opened at 102 West Oklahoma Avenue, in the Dewey Building. In 1927 the Pedigo Theatre opened in the Moffitt Building at 112 West Oklahoma. It was later renamed the "State Theatre" and closed sometime between 1948 and the early 1960s.

During the 1970s Guthrie possessed two drive-in theaters: the Tee Cee Drive-In at 1122 North Wentz and the Beacon Drive-In located about a mile south of Guthrie, at

2404 South Division Street. The Beacon Drive-In is one of the eight remaining drive-ins in Oklahoma. It is a single-screen drive-in with spaces for 360 vehicles. It opened on April 22, 1950 under the ownership of Al Powell. Today his grandson, Marsh Powell, is the present owner and operator. The Beacon is still open on a seasonal basis.

Coyle and Crescent

Coyle residents could attend movies at a theater located at 116 East Main Street. Crescent possessed a few theaters. In 1911 one was located at 104 North Grand Street but had closed or relocated to 116 North Grand by 1918. Meanwhile, Crescent's opera house occupied the second floor of the building at 109-111 South Grand. It was superseded by a large theater at 113-117 South Grand.

Oklahoma County

The discussion that follows attempts to paint a broad overview of the movie theater history of Oklahoma County rather than a detailed look at individual theaters and their own histories. In the process it emphasizes developments in Edmond and Oklahoma City.

Edmond

Some of the first movies in Edmond, before 1910, were probably shown in a nickelodeon that faced North Second Street and occupied the back of the lot that was 100 South Broadway. The Edmond Opera House was one of the early entertainment facilities in the town. It was built about 1909 and located at 207 South Broadway. By 1914 an air

dome operated at 7-9 South Broadway. About 1921 the Gem Theatre opened at 17 South Broadway. It remained an icon in Edmond until the 1950s. From 1924 to 1929 the Joyland Theatre Air Dome operated in the lot on the southwest corner of Broadway and Main. The most enduring of the Edmond theaters, however, was the Broncho Theatre. It was built in 1935 and showed its first movie in January, 1936. It was located in the Spearman's Building at 1 South Broadway—the very space where the Joyland Air Dome had been. From 1947 to about 1950 it seems that the Broncho Theatre shared building space with the Edmond Hospital. The hospital was located on the second floor of the Spearman Building.[56] The Broncho ceased operation as a movie theater in the 1970s.[57] Edmond appears to have gotten its first drive-in about 1971. It was the Woodstock Drive-In located at 1823 North Boulevard. For the better part of the 1960s, Edmond was also home to the Motion Picture Film Libraries (101 South Broadway).

Oklahoma City

Construction of the Overholser Opera House in 1890 on the southeast corner of Robinson and Clark Streets usually marks the beginning of the history of theaters in Oklahoma City. In 1900 this was superseded by a new and larger facility (also called the Overholser Opera House) on Grand (now Sheridan) between Robinson and Harvey Streets. It offered vaudeville entertainment until the 1920s when it was renovated in order to show moving pictures. At that time it became the Orpheum Theatre (and later was the

[56] See the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1931-1949 and also the Edmond Telephone Directories for the late 1940s and early 1950s.

[57] This paragraph is based on the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of Edmond and the manuscript "Chronology of Motion Picture Theaters in Edmond, OK" by Lucille Warrick, October 17, 1994 in the clippings file at the Edmond Historical Society.

Warner Theatre). The Orpheum was not the first movie theater, however. Delmar Gardens probably deserves that distinction, though it is interesting to note that the same family, the Sinopoulos, built Delmar Gardens and operated the Orpheum Theatre.[58] Delmar Gardens was an early amusement park and it included a theater (Delmar Theatre) for live entertainment and, eventually, movies.

During the 1920s Oklahoma City obtained its share of movie palaces. The epitome of the grand and extravagant picture palace was the Criterion Theatre at 116 West Main Street. It opened in 1921, could seat 1,000 people, had a nursery, and was lavishly decorated. Other picture palaces included Warner Theatre, Empress Theatre (111-113 West Main), Folly Theatre (123-125 West Sheridan), Liberty Theatre (21-23 North Robinson), the Mediterranean-styled Midwest Theatre (14-18 North Harvey), and State Theatre (20 North Hudson), to name just a few. Beyond the downtown core, movie theaters began to appear in the surrounding neighborhoods giving us the likes of Tower Theatre (423-425 NW 23rd), Mayflower Theatre (1133 NW 23rd), Knob Hill Theatre (404 SW 25th), Will Rogers Theatre (4304 N. Western), Redskin Theatre (822 SW 29th), and more.

Oklahoma City not only experienced the heyday of the picture palace it also became an important center for the regional distribution and exchange of motion pictures. These distributors and exchanges received movies from the Hollywood production companies and then provided the movies to local and regional theaters. Until the 1950s the film used for the movies, as well as for general photography, was made from

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[58] Robert E. Lee, "61 Movie Theaters Identified," *The Oklahoman*, November 9, 1990; Pendleton Woods, *Historic Oklahoma County: An Illustrated History* (San Antonio: Historical Publishing Network, 2002), 18; *Polk's Oklahoma City Directory 1930* (Kansas City: R. L. Polk & Co., 1930).

cellulose nitrate. This is an extremely flammable material and required that the films be stored in facilities that were fire-safe, well-ventilated, and where low-light conditions could be maintained.

By 1930 as many as eighteen movie companies had film distribution or exchange offices in Oklahoma City (Table 2). These offices were concentrated in the area between Hudson and Shartel Avenues and Sheridan and Main Streets. In 1930 the list of film distributors with Oklahoma City offices included Allied Film Exchanges (704 West Sheridan), Columbia Pictures Corporation (702 West Sheridan), General Talking Picture Corporation (531 West Main), Griffith Amusement Picture Company (11 North Lee), Metro-Goldwyn Mayer Distributing Corporation 515 South Robinson), and Pathe Exchange (519 South Robinson).

Table 2.[59]

Theaters and Film Distributors in Oklahoma City, 1930-1950

	Number of Theaters	Number of Motion Picture Distributors and Film Exchanges
1930	17	18
1942	28	18
1950	32	18

By 1950 the number of film distributors in Oklahoma City had not changed, but included still more familiar names like Loew's Incorporated (629 West Sheridan), Paramount Film Distributing Corporation (701 West Sheridan), Twentieth Century Fox

[59] Compiled from the 1930, 1942, and 1950 editions of *Polk's Oklahoma City Directory*. The number of theaters likely includes just a few theaters that were used primarily for live performances as opposed to motion pictures.

Film Corporation (10 North Lee), Universal Film Exchange (625 West Sheridan), and Warner-Brothers Picture Distributing Corporation (630 West Sheridan). Concerns about the monopolization of the motion picture industry through control over the production and distribution of films, as well as control over the theaters led the Supreme Court to require that production companies terminate the ownership of movie theaters.[60]

The history of movie theaters in Oklahoma County, and particularly Oklahoma City, is complex. This is largely the result of rapid turnover in the management and ownership of theaters and is illustrated by the profusion of theaters and the frequency with which these businesses changed their names. Many theaters came and went leaving few clues about the details of their commercial existence. City directories provide a glimpse of the different theaters and identify their locations. They also capture the growth in the number of theaters (see Table 2). The number of theaters in Oklahoma City increased 88% between 1930 and 1950.

After the Second World War four developments played a key role in the changing landscape of movie theaters across the country. Oklahoma City followed the national trend. Those developments included the diffusion of television, suburbanization, the spread of twin-screen theaters, and urban renewal. The television came into the American home on a large scale in the early 1950s. In response, movie theater owners sought ways to make the movie-watching experience novel again. The introduction of wide screens was one innovation. More specifically, the attempt to market Cinerama was one of the first reactions within the movie industry to the threat from television. Cinerama refers to the use of a wide and intensely curved screen in an attempt to nearly surround the viewer

[60] Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 163.

with action and sound. Three film projectors were needed to show a Cinerama flick.[61] At least two theaters in Oklahoma City were converted for the purposes of showing Cinerama movies. These were the Warner Theatre (213 West Sheridan), which appears to have shown Cinerama movies in 1956 and 1957, and the Harber Theatre (19 North Robinson). It showed Cinerama in the early 1960s. A third theater, the Continental Theatre (Northwest Expressway and Mosteller), was a new theater in 1965—indeed, the first to open in the city since 1947 according to an article in the *Daily Oklahoman* on August 27, 1965. It was built with a very wide screen capable of showing Cinerama. The theater operated until 1983.

Showing films in 3-D was another attempt to bring people back to the movies, but these novelties were expensive and short-lived. The competition provided by television plus the on-going, post-war suburbanization threatened the success of downtown movie theaters. The movie lights on Main Street were dimmed as a result of these forces. According to one estimate, only seven theaters remained in downtown Oklahoma City in 1962.[62]

When the push to renew the downtown began in earnest in the mid to late 1960s, it would deal the final blow to many of Oklahoma City's finest theaters. As if to foreshadow these developments, the Warner Theatre was razed in 1963. Then, like a row of dominoes, the State Theatre was torn down in 1971, as was the Criterion Theatre in 1972, the Midwest and Harber Theatres in 1975, and the Villa Theatre in 1978. Many more theaters across the city met similar fates, or were simply forced to close their doors for lack of profit.

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[61] Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*, 166.

Today, the faintest traces of the many movie theaters that once dotted the city's landscape remain. Of the theaters that have survived, most no longer show movies but have instead been adapted for other uses. In numerous cases the façade—often replete with a distinctive marquee—recalls the building's history as a movie theater. For example, the Knob Hill Theatre (404 West Commerce) now houses the Oklahoma Opry, the May Theatre (1515 North May) has become an antique mall, the Agnew Theatre (2821 South Agnew) is a Harley Davidson Motorcycle shop, and the Will Rogers Theatre now houses a Japanese restaurant.

Drive-In Theaters

The history of the various drive-ins that once marked the boundaries of the city limits is equally challenging to trace. In the case of movie houses, often the shell of building remains to remind us that it once was a theater. With drive-in theaters, by contrast, fewer remnants survive. Occasionally one can spot a lone screen—a relic of a by-gone fad—that stands out of place in the midst of urban and suburban sprawl, but in many cases drive-in theaters proved easy to pave over leaving few clues about the ways in which a particular site was previously used.

A preliminary survey of the movie listings in the *Daily Oklahoman* indicates that the first two drive-ins may have opened in Oklahoma City in 1947. That is, these may have been the first two drive-ins to run advertisements in the newspaper. These two theaters were the Northwest Highway Drive-In located at 55th Street (3101 Northwest Expressway), and the New Odom Drive-In located, according to the ad, "three miles

[62] "Cooper Shuts Two Theaters," *The Oklahoman*, October 31, 1962.

south on [the] Norman Hi-way [*sic*]."[63] This would have placed the drive-in at 9301 South Shields Boulevard, near what is today the northern limit of the city of Moore. Although the Odom Drive-In is believed to have remained in operation until 1975, none of the more recent movie listings consulted in the *Daily Oklahoman* contained an entry for this theater, suggesting that it might have served the residents of Moore to a greater extent than it served those of Oklahoma City.[64]

By 1950 the movie listings in the *Daily Oklahoman* contained entries for ten different drive-ins. Most impressive was the full-page advertisement for the grand opening of the new Twilight Gardens Drive-In at May Avenue and Britton Road. This new drive-in promised a garden setting with a fountain, reflecting pool, and a large playground for the kids.[65] In 1960 there were approximately twelve drive-ins around the city.[66] By 1970, judging from the movie listings in the *Daily Oklahoman*, there were just seven drive-in theaters.[67] Today, only one drive-in theater in Oklahoma City is still in operation. It is the Winchester Drive-In at 6930 South Western Avenue. Built about 1975, this theater does not yet meet the age requirement for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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[63] See the movie theater listing in *The Oklahoman*, September 27, 1947.
[64] This is not to suggest that the search was thorough. Rather, only a small sample of movie listings in the newspaper archive was consulted.
[65] See the movie listing in *The Oklahoman*, September 29, 1950.
[66] *The Film Daily 1960 Year Book of Motion Pictures*, 1056.
[67] See, for example, *The Oklahoman*, September 26, 1975.

Payne County

Stillwater

As the county seat and largest town, Stillwater had the most theaters of any Payne County town. As early as 1910 Stillwater boasted two theaters and an opera house for vaudeville shows. A city directory for Stillwater included two ads proclaiming the best in entertainment. The ad for the Alamo Theatre, located at 914 Main Street, declared it the "best vaudeville on the road...[with] nothing but up-to-date moving pictures."[68] The Pastime Theatre, at 612 Main Street, announced that it provided the "latest and best moving pictures and illustrated songs."[69]

By 1913, nickelodeons operated at 716, 719, and 915 South Main Street. Two of these three theaters would survive as movie houses for many decades. The Mecca Theater operated at 716 South Main Street into the 1950s. The theater at 719 South Main Street was first known as the Camera Theater, a name it kept until 1952 when it became the Crest Theater. Within four years, however, the Crest Theater had closed.

In the 1920s the Aggie Theater opened at 619 South Main Street. It became the Centre Twin in 1980 but ceased operation near the end of that decade. In 1939 the Campus Theater opened at 202 Knoblock, just south of the fire station on the OSU campus. It remained a movie theater into the 1970s. It was subsequently converted into a restaurant and now houses the popular pizza place known as The Hideaway.

The first theater built in Stillwater following the Second World War was the Leachman Theater at 424 South Main Street. This was Stillwater's most elaborate theater,

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[68] Hoffine's *Stillwater and Payne County Oklahoma Directory for 1910* (Oklahoma City: Hoffine Directory Company), 85.
[69] *Hoffine's Stillwater and Payne County Oklahoma Directory for 1910*, 66.

replete with large wall graphics and a balcony. It too closed in the late 1980s and has since been converted into a furniture store. The first drive-in theater in Stillwater appears to have been the Moonlite Theater at 515 North Main Street. It opened for business about 1949 and lasted for nearly twenty years before being superseded by two other drive-ins located on the outskirts of town: the East Sixth Drive-In and the One-Seven-Seven North Drive-In. These drive-ins were opened in the late 1960s and also operated for about twenty years. The Satellite Twin Theaters opened in the 1970s at 1126 West Hall of Fame Avenue, just north of the OSU campus. It ceased operation in the 1990s and has since been converted into classrooms. Today Stillwater is served by one six-screen theater.

Cushing

Cushing enjoyed its share of nickelodeons. Between about 1905 and 1924 six theaters came and went. This includes the Wigwam Theatre at 201 North Cleveland, as well as other theaters at 108 East Broadway, 109 East Broadway, 110 West Broadway, 122 East Broadway, and 121-123 West Moses. One of Cushing's more prominent theaters, Grand Theatre, stood at 116 North Harrison. Constructed about 1910, it was showing two-reel serials by 1914. It may have survived into the early 1920s, but by 1924 it no longer appears on the Sanborn maps of Cushing.

Cushing's most lavish theater is the Dunkin Theatre at 205-207 East Broadway, and it remains the only local business built as a movie theater that is still operating as a theater. The theater is named for Hiram Dunkin, a local resident who got rich after oil was discovered on his farm. Dunkin paid for the construction of the theater, which is still

distinguished by the terra-cotta ornamentation on the exterior. The theater opened in 1926 and still operates as a single-screen theater.

Longtime residents of Cushing are likely to remember the Sundown Drive-In. It was located about three miles east of Cushing on the north side of Highway 33, and the footprint for it can still be found on the 1975 topographic map for the area. A news item from 1952 indicates that a second drive-in was planned for the north side of the city.[70] It appears that this drive-in was never built. In addition, Cushing possessed at least one theater that served the town's African American population. This theater is recorded on the 1931-1938 Sanborn map of Cushing in the 1100 block of North Central Avenue.[71]

Yale

History has not been kind to Yale's theaters. Main Street in Yale was once home to two indoor theaters and an air dome. The indoor theaters were located at 106-108 South Main and 110 North Main. In 1916, the air dome occupied the site at 115 South Main. By the 1920s the theater on South Main had given way to other commercial functions. The theater on North Main appears to have demolished by fire, leaving an unfortunate gap in the street's commercial façade.

[70] "Cushing Theater Man Plans New Drive-In," *The Oklahoman*, September 25, 1952.
[71] The Cinematour web site calls this the "Little Harlem Theatre," and give the address as 1125 North Central Avenue. The Sanborn map address for the theater is 1107 North Central Avenue.

Perkins

The first theater in Perkins, showing vaudeville acts and movies, operated at 233 South Main from about 1912 to 1919. This was followed by a larger building that was built to house Perkins' Lyric Theatre. For thirty-seven years the Lyric Theatre was *the* theater in Perkins. Although the building still stands, it presently houses the Perkins Food Center.

XV. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

City and Telephone Directories - El Reno

The El Reno Carnegie Library has an extensive collection of city directories and telephone books. City directories exist for the following years: 1893, 1901-1902, 1903, 1909, 1910, 1912, 1918, 1928, 1930, 1938, 1941, 1946-1947, 1948-1950, 1958, 1962, 1978, 1987, and 1988.

City and Telephone Directories - Guthrie

The Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma has some city directories for Guthrie. Those consulted for this project cover the following years: 1926, 1930, 1948, 1964, and 1972.

City and Telephone Directories - Stillwater

Hoffine's Stillwater and Payne County Oklahoma Directory for 1910. Oklahoma City: Hoffhine Directory Company.

Stillwater City Directory 1939-1940. Residence Edition. Stillwater, OK: Crossman Multilith and Printing Co.

1941 Stillwater City Directory. Stillwater, OK Crossman Printing Co.

1945 Stillwater City Directory. Stillwater, OK: Crossman Printing Co.

Telephone Directory, Stillwater, Oklahoma. Southwestern Bell Telephone Company.

These resources are housed in Special Collections at the library at Oklahoma State University. Telephone directory coverage exists for most years since 1934.

City and Telephone Directories - Norman

The Norman Public Library has some city directories back to 1926, cross index directories from the 1930s into the 1960s, and telephone books from the 1960s.

University of Oklahoma Directory 1945-1946. Norman: *The Oklahoma Daily*, University of Oklahoma.

City Directories - Oklahoma City

The Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma has some city directories for Oklahoma City. Those consulted for this project cover the following years: 1930, 1936, 1939, 1942, 1945, 1947, 1949-50, 1957, and 1959. The Western History Collection also retains a copy of the *Negro City Directory, Oklahoma City, 1941-42.*

City and Telephone Directories - Yukon

The Mabel C. Fry Public Library in Yukon has telephone directories dating back to 1952.

Newspapers

The Oklahoman.

The archives for this newspaper are now searchable on-line. Coverage begins September 1, 1901 and extends to the present. This proved to be one of the most valuable sources of information for Oklahoma movie theaters. The ability to view the ads was especially helpful.

Ingle, Jeremy A. 2004. "From the 'Cozy' to the '89er': A Theater History." *Kingfisher Times and Free Press*, 19 April.

This is a good review of the history of theaters in Kingfisher, but there are some gaps in the information provided, including the locations of some of the different theaters.

Medley, Robert. 2000. "Film Row Nostalgia Kept Alive." *The Oklahoman*, 15 May, p. 95.

This short article discusses the "film row" that once existed in the 700 block of West Sheridan and the role of the film distribution companies.

Secondary Sources

Planning/Preservation Documents

"Architectural/Historic Intensive Level Survey of Certain Portions of El Reno, Canadian County, Oklahoma." Stillwater, OK: Department of History, Oklahoma State University, 1989.

This slim document outlines the boundaries of a proposed, discontinuous historic district in downtown El Reno but contains little information on theaters.

Robison Boeck Architects. "Reconnaissance Level Survey of a Portion of Central Oklahoma City." Oklahoma City: State Historic Preservation Office, 1992.

Planning Department, City of Oklahoma City. "Reconnaissance Level Survey of Portions of Oklahoma City (Northeast, Northwest, and South Oklahoma City)." Oklahoma City: State Historic Preservation Office, 1994.

These reports include information pertaining to the movie theater industry that developed in Oklahoma City. They also contain information on specific theaters and film distribution companies. The 1992 study identified the Film Exchange Historic District, bounded by Hudson and Colcord, Sheridan, Shartel, Main, and Lee streets.

Trade/Industry Publications, Archives, and Web Sites

Alicoate, Jack, ed. *The 1940 Film Daily Year Book of Motion Pictures*. 22nd Annual Edition. New York: The Film Daily, 1940.

The Film Daily 1960 Year Book of Motion Pictures. Forty-second Annual Edition. New York: The Film Daily, 1960.

These annuals, just two of the many published from 1915 to 1970, contain excellent statistical reports as well as summaries of events, legislation, and other developments affecting the motion picture industry. As such, they provide a very helpful glimpse at theater-related goings-on across the country and around the world. Especially relevant for this project were the lists of theaters for all states, later revised to include art and drive-in theaters for the fifty states as well.

CinemaTour: Cinema History Around the World. http://www.cinematour.com.

A very valuable Web site launched in 1997 by Adam Martin, who was researching Oklahoma theaters. CinemaTour provides a list of movie theaters for the United States and some foreign countries. A search on Oklahoma yielded 554

records. Where possible, records include a snapshot of the theater, location, and information about when it closed and/or operated.

Cinema Treasures. http://cinematreasures.org/

This is a non-profit Web site interested in the preservation of historic movie theaters. There is some unevenness to the information in that the public can post information about different theaters.

Welcome to the Drive-In Theater. http://driveintheater.com/index.htm.

This Web site provides information on the history of drive-in theaters as well as some state-specific information.

Motion Picture News.

A weekly publication that was printed between 1913 and 1930 with information about movies and movie studios.

Rivest's Ultimate List of Movie Theaters. http://movie-theatre.org/theatre.htm

This helpful Web site supplies information on movie theaters around the country and in Canada. Recent updates to the site include city maps showing movie theater locations.

Theatre Historical Society of America [THS].

Located in Elmhurst, Illinois, this organization supports research on theaters, their history, and architecture. THS maintains archives as well as a theater museum. Its primary publication is the journal, *Marquee.*

General Studies

Christman, Roy. 1998. Movie Theaters in the Maintenance of Rural Communities in Kansas. *Great Plains Research* 8(2): 299-314.

The premise of this article is that saving old movie theaters and converting them in order that they also serve as performance theaters can bring economic benefits and community pride to small towns.

Freeman, Robert Eliot. *Scene II: Re-Using Old Movie Theaters*. N.p.: By author, 1977.

This slim booklet offers strategies for converting old movie theaters into productive, usable facilities such as performing arts centers. The author sees movie theaters as an integral part of the revitalization of downtowns and presents some specific examples of such adaptive reuse; some more attentive to historic preservation than others.

Hall, Ben M. *The Golden Age of the Movie Palace: The Best Remaining Seats*. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1961.

Bosley Crowther's foreword to this book calls it "an appropriate epitaph" to the grand movie palaces. This classic work, one of the first to detail movie palace architecture, concentrates on Roxy's contributions to theater design and extravagance, but also considers the influence of architects like Thomas Lamb and John Eberson, especially the latter's atmospheric theaters. Other chapters recount the role of the orchestra, the importance of the Wurlitzer, and the evolution of the stage show.

Liebs, Chester H. *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985.

This book surveys the enterprises (gas stations, miniature golf courses, restaurants, etc.) that grow up alongside our highways and discusses the changes they have created on the landscape. One chapter is devoted to drive-in theaters. It presents a history of drive-ins from the first invention to the post-war boom and their subsequent decline in the 1970s. The chapter is nicely illustrated with photographs and diagrams.

Marling, Karal Ann. "Fantasies in Dark Places: The Cultural Geography of the American Movie Palace." In *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*, edited by Paul C. Adams, Steven Hoelscher, and Karen E. Till, 8-23. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

This chapter provides a brief and very basic overview of the history of movie theaters in the U.S. Marling's descriptions of the movie theaters are rich in metaphor; she delights in evoking their appeal to luxury and poshness, illusion, and mystery. One section of the chapter discusses the architecture of escapism, which she sees as influenced by architects familiar with Art Deco and Beaux Arts styles. The final section of the chapter introduces a discussion of how movie theaters are portrayed in the movies.

Mielziner, Jo. *The Shapes of Our Theatre*. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc. 1970.
The author presents a scholarly review of the origins and development of different types of stage designs, from the open-thrust stage to the proscenium stage, and more. It addresses theater design from the standpoint of stage performance rather than film showings.

Naylor, David. *American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1981.

Abundantly illustrated, Naylor's work remains one of the standard sources on the historical and architectural evolution of movie theaters, with attention to the cause of preservation. The appendix contains a list of movie theaters built between 1891 and 1948, and notes which ones have been razed. Unfortunately, it is not clear how the list was compiled. No Oklahoma theaters made the list.

Sanders, Don and Susan. *The American Drive-In Theatre*. Osceola, WI: Motorbooks International Publishers & Wholesalers, 1997.

This book recounts the history of the drive-in theater and is very nicely illustrated. It is a good starting point for information on the rise and fall of drive-ins.

Shand, P. Morton. *Modern Picture-Houses and Theaters*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1930.

This book concentrates on German theaters and (at least in the view of the author) the lack of respectable theater and cinema architects in England. American theaters are not addressed because the author considers them too gaudy.

Sharp, Dennis. *The Picture Palace and Other Buildings for the Movies*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969.

Consult this book for its ample illustrations rather than for its text, which is not especially informative. This is perhaps the result of the author's attempt to discuss movie theater architecture on both sides of the Atlantic. British cinema receives the greatest emphasis, but there is one chapter devoted to the American origins of movie palace architecture.

Urban, Joseph. *Theatres*. New York: Theatre Arts, Inc., 1929.

This book begins with a brief history of theaters, discussing their origins in Classical Greece and noting some of the design changes that developed over time. The primary focus of the book, however, rests on a collection of illustrations and line drawings of six specific theaters: the Ziegfeld Theater, the Paramount Theater, the Metropolitan Opera House, The Reinhardt Theater, the Jewish Art

Theater, and the Music Center. The author was the architect who designed the Ziegfeld, and one surmises he designed the others as well, though the book is silent on this.

Sexton, R. W. and B. F. Betts. *American Theatres of Today*. 2 vols. New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., Inc., 1927 (reprinted 1977 by Vestal Press, NY).

The lead author was an architect who published on commercial and residential architecture. The first volume discusses theater design issues, concentrating on the biggest and most extravagant theaters. Most of the pages have plan diagrams of the theaters mentioned. The second volume includes chapters devoted to theater decoration, acoustics, and such details as heating and ventilating them. No Oklahoma theaters are featured.

Valentine, Maggie. *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre, Starring S. Charles Lee.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.

This book explores the architectural history of movie theaters by concentrating on the life and work of S. Charles Lee, a Los Angeles-based architect whose commissions spanned the movie heyday from the 1920s through the 1940s. The author's ability to situate Lee's work in the national context of theater development makes this work especially valuable. Appendix A contains national statistics on movie theaters and movie attendance from 1922 to 1992.

Works Relating to Oklahoma

A History of Canadian County, Oklahoma. 1991. El Reno, Oklahoma: Canadian County History Book Association, Inc.

This book consists largely of an alphabetical listing of Canadian County towns, and a discussion of their history. Many of the entries identify businesses in the towns, but movie theaters are rarely mentioned.

Ball, Sara Nee. *Yukon's First One Hundred Years: Yukon, Oklahoma Centennial, 1891-1991*. Yukon, OK: United Color Press, 1990.

At this writing, this appears to be the only substantive history of Yukon. It contains (on p. 94) a very brief discussion of the Spencer Opera House and the history of movie theaters in the town.

Blackburn, Bob L. 1982. *Heart of the Promised Land, Oklahoma County: An Illustrated History*. Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, Inc.

This is a good starting point for information on Oklahoma County. Its coverage of theaters is brief, but it mentions some of the more prominent theaters of the city and its vicinity including the Criterion, Midwest, Victoria, and Liberty theaters.

Booker, Susan, "Did They Really Sing in the Opera Houses?: Public Entertainment in Oklahoma and Indian Territories, 1895-1907," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 81 (Summer 2003): 132-153.

In this article Booker supplies a descriptive account of the design and function of the opera house, as well as the kinds of shows that played in large and small towns.

Cushing, Oklahoma: *The First 100 Years 1891-1991*. Commemorative Book Committee.

Like most commemorative histories, this one provides a brief overview of Cushing's history and is supplemented by historic photos. This appears to be the only publication on Cushing to provide photos of two of the town's early theaters, the Empress and the Grand.

Lentz, Lloyd C. 1990. *Guthrie: A History of the Capital City 1889-1910*. Guthrie, OK: Logan County Historical Society.

The time period covered by this work is early for movie theaters. Nevertheless, it does note that Guthrie was home to the Brooks Opera House that was built about 1899 and had a seating capacity of over 1,000 people. It also provides a photo of the building.

Lincoln County Historical Society, comp. and ed. *Lincoln County, Oklahoma History.* Claremore, OK: Country Lane Press. 1988.

Organized by town, this large tome contains a few references to theaters in Chandler (p. 81).

Newsom, D. Earl. 1997. *The Story of Exciting Payne County.* Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press, Inc.

This book is a valuable resource on the history of Payne County towns both for its discussion and photographic coverage. Page 71 has photos of the Leachman and Aggie Theaters in Stillwater.

Oklahoma Film Society. http://www.okfs.org/default2.htm.

This is a non-profit organization that supports the film industry in the state. It is located in Oklahoma City and has some historical information on its Web site. At this writing it was trying to revitalize the Film District in Oklahoma City.

Speer, Bonnie. *Cleveland County: Pride of the Promised Land: An Illustrated History.* Norman, OK: author, 1988.

This book contains valuable information on the history of Cleveland County and the towns of Norman, Moore, Lexington, and Noble. The Sooner Theater in Norman is discussed on pp. 111-112, photos of it appear on p. 115 and p. 124. There is a 1967 photo of Main Street showing the University Theater on p. 128.

Wells, Laura Lou. [no date]. *Young Cushing in Oklahoma Territory.* Stillwater, OK: Cimarron Valley Historical Society.

Wells provides a readable history of Cushing through its oil boom. The book contains little information on entertainment, however.

XVI. SUMMARY

Researching historic movie theaters in central Oklahoma proved to be a fascinating experience but one filled with numerous challenges because so many theaters changed their names and/or locations over the years. It is hoped that this report provides a helpful starting point for the inventory of the state's historic movie theaters. This section presents a brief summary of the findings of this survey, but these findings should not be construed as definitive. In numerous instances additional research is still needed to more conclusively establish when a particular theater was in business and what its business name or names were. Additional research is also needed to document the interiors of these historic buildings.

This thematic survey provided minimum-level documentation on sixty-three (63) properties in the seven-county study area in central Oklahoma. Both indoor and drive-in theaters were surveyed. As a result of this project, a total of ten (10) properties already listed in the National Register were updated, while another two (2) properties were identified as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. An additional nineteen (19) properties were identified as warranting further study, including one drive-in theater. These properties are in various stages of repair, and additional research needs to be conducted to determine if they are eligible for listing in the National Register. Finally, thirty-two (32) other properties were not recommended for further study at this time.

XVII. ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

The theaters listed here were selected from the central Oklahoma survey as significant architecturally. The following commentary will address each of these theaters grouped according to the county in which they are located.

Canadian County

Jewel Theatre, 107-109 North Bickford Avenue, El Reno, Oklahoma. This two-storied Italianate style structure, is significant in architectural detail and the fact that it occupies only a portion of a larger street façade (originally the Kerfoot Brothers space in conjunction with I. Jalonik space). The lower level entry portion of the façade has been removed, but could be renovated and returned to its original design by referencing the adjacent I. Jalonik building. Significant to any future restoration is that the upper story of the theater retains its original cast iron Italianate detailing. This structure is important to the historical fabric of the city street edge and should be restored.

Cleveland County

Boomer Theatre, 765 South Asp Avenue, Norman, Oklahoma. This theater, although a stylistic departure from the surrounding city fabric, displays several interesting modern, or moderne elements that suggests certain stylistic ties to the De Stijl architectural movement (roughly 1917 to 1931) in Holland. There are also form/shape elements (banded structural "beams" that penetrate and continue through vertical planes of the same material, and contrasted in back panels of ceramic tile) that suggest the façade

might have been influenced by architectural work being designed in Southern California (most notably work by the architect Rudolph Schindler) at the time of its construction in 1947. The vertical sign element also contains similar design elements. These stylistic overtones could be influenced by the presence of architect Bruce Goff (1904-1982), who arrived in Norman in 1946 to teach at the School of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma, becoming Head of the school in 1947. Goff became a major proponent of modern design in the school.

Sooner Theatre Building, 101-103 East Main Street, Norman, Oklahoma. A beautiful building of brick and terra-cotta in the Spanish Revival style should remain on the National Register. The Coleman Theatre in Miami, Oklahoma also is also in the Spanish Revival style and was built in the same year (1929) as the Sooner Theatre.

University Theatre, 225-227 East Main Street, Norman, Oklahoma. Although the street level portion of the façade has been altered (minimally) the building still retains most of its original appearance. Fixed glass aluminum windows have been installed in the upper story fenestrations. All features of its original Art Deco terra-cotta motifs (flower petals and edge scallops) are in excellent condition and the brick is in excellent condition. The second story appears to "float" above the glass display windows that line the street edge.

Logan County

Theatre Building, 113-117 South Grand Avenue, Crescent, Oklahoma. This building is fascinating in its use of cast iron canopies suspended from the brick façade. The building is also interesting in the manner it has worked within the 1920's brick commercial style yet has modified the entry portico to accent the theater entrance. The original storefront display windows have been modified and the transom windows above have been in-filled with wood siding.

Pollard Theatre, 120-122 West Harrison Avenue, Guthrie, Oklahoma. The Pollard Theatre is one of Guthrie's architectural and historical jewels and also of significance, the Pollard is still used as a theater today. The building is in pristine condition and is a major participant in the historical street edge and Guthrie Historic District. This structure should be added to the National Register.

Dewey Building/Cimarron Theatre, 102-104 West Oklahoma Avenue, Guthrie, Oklahoma. This is another landmark building in the town of Guthrie. It is significant that much of the original Oklahoma Avenue façade elements like the mullioned street-level display windows, and the prism glass transom sections, still exist. The theater entrance (the 102 section of the building) is apparently a 1926 alteration of the original building (1901).

Moffitt Building/Pedigo Theatre, 112 West Oklahoma Avenue, Guthrie, Oklahoma. This building's upper floor façade exhibits its original Romanesque Revival arches and original window subdivisions. Unfortunately the lower street level portion of the façade has been altered significantly (as in many other Guthrie structures). Many such alterations as this are often "cover-ups" over the original façade elements, thereby facilitating future restorations through the removal of later alterations. This appears to be the case with the Moffitt Building.

Beacon Drive-In, 2404 South Division Street, Guthrie, Oklahoma. Although not of any significant architectural style (other than maybe "drive-in movie" style), the Beacon Drive-In structures are important to the history of the movie industry and other entertainment venues. The 1950's saw a significant rise in the number of drive-in movie theaters across America, but by the 1980's, with the advent of pay-for-view cable TV systems and other home movie technologies, drive-in movie theaters began closing their operations in record numbers. Interestingly, and significant to this discussion, drive-in movie theaters began making a come-back in the early part of the twenty-first century. Beginning around the year 2000, old once-abandoned drive-ins began refurbishing their facilities and today, many are once again open for business.

Oklahoma County

Plaza Theatre, 1725 Northwest 16th Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. A significant part of the Gatewood Historical District, the Plaza Theatre is listed on the National

Register. The building is in a significant state of deterioration and neglect. The windowed portion of the façade is a replacement system and the brick sill below the window band has a section of brick that implies a later infill. This section might possibly have contained the original ticket booth.

Tower Theatre, 423-425 Northwest 23rd Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The Tower Theatre façade is composed primarily of its signage—which is a significant element to the street edge. This exuberant sign has much in keeping with its Route 66 (23rd Street) heritage and is an important historical Route 66 relic. Portions of the sign are beginning to deteriorate. This theater entrance should be included on the National Register.

Capitol Hill (Yale) Theatre, 229 Southwest 25th Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. This structure is an important structure in the Capitol Hill Historic District. Its Moderne style façade and marquee, though currently in bad repair, is an outstanding example "Theater Modern" style.

Knob Hill Theatre, 404 Southwest 25th Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. This is a very well preserved structure currently housing the Oklahoma Opry, a live country/gospel music venue and is an important structure in the Capitol Hill Historic District. The "Okla Opry" letters appear to be a later change from the original "Knob Hill" marquee. The

simple Moderne styled façade is quite elegant. The curved upper wall surface is very well conceived and executed in its subtle shape and delineated subdivisions.

Rodeo Theatre, 2221-2223 Exchange Avenue, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The Rodeo Theatre building is an important historical component of the Exchange Avenue northern edge street frontage. The building is currently well maintained. The sign marquee appears to be an alteration of the original sign.

May Theatre, 1515 North May Avenue, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Currently an antique store, the May Theatre building's sign and entry foyer incorporates several fine architectural features. The curved marquee and vertical sign element are well proportioned. It is interesting in how the entry element extends from and attaches to the auditorium seating area. The auditorium portion is of little architectural significance.

Penn Theatre, 1212 North Pennsylvania Avenue, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. This Art Moderne styled theater is an important building in the Classen Ten Penn Historic District. Its various façade features and details appear as if modeled after similar buildings in Miami, Florida. The building is in great need of repair and additional maintenance.

Will Rogers Theatre, 4322 North Western Avenue, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. This theater's Art Moderne entry sign and marquee is an important historical element to the

Western Avenue street scape and is a contributor to the Central Park Historic District. The building is in a very well maintained state.

Victoria Theatre, 1901 North Classen Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. A contributing resource to the University Historic District, the Victoria Theatre (built in 1928) is an amazing adaptation (probably unprecedented for a movie theater) of the Neo-Gothic style. The building is in good condition and warrants consideration for National Register status.

Del City Theatre, 2908 Epperly Drive, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Built in the Commercial style (1950) this building has strong suggestions of being "Oklahoman" in character (especially in the use of stone as an exterior cladding). Although not an architectural "beauty" the building still is strongly evocative of its time of construction and its place in the cultural fabric of Del City.

Ritz Theatre, 912 Northwest Britton Road, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Built in 1955, the Ritz Theatre is showing the pains of neglect and minimal maintenance. Although not a strong architectural statement, the building's features (especially its signage) is classic 1950's movie house design with Moderne overtones.

Payne County

Dunkin Theatre, 205-207 East Broadway Street, Cushing, Oklahoma. Built in 1926, the Dunkin Theatre's street façade is a marvelously detailed in various terra-cotta tile. Italianate in character the building is also well maintained and serves as a significant historical and cultural icon for the city of Cushing.

Leachman Theatre, 424 South Main Street, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This theater has happily survived in almost pristine condition even though it now serves as a furniture showroom and storage facility. The interior surfaces still retain their original painted floral motifs, stage, and curtains. Built in 1947, this theater should be nominated for the National Register.