

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received NOV 26 1982
date entered

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

1. Name

historic The Paramount Theater

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 352 Cypress Street N/A not for publication

city, town Abilene N/A vicinity of

state Texas code 048 county Taylor code 441

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Abilene Preservation League

street & number 2526 South 7th

city, town Abilene N/A vicinity of state Texas 79605

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Taylor County Courthouse

street & number South Fourth and Oak Streets

city, town Abilene state Texas 79601

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Sites Inventory
Recorded Texas Historic Landmark has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 2/79 federal state county local

depository for survey records Texas Historical Commission

city, town Austin state Texas

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Built in 1929 by Abilene philanthropist H. O. Wooten, the Paramount Theater is not only a city landmark, but an architecturally significant example, for Texas, of early 20th-century interior theatrical design. The theater combines elements of several different styles in a perfectly harmonious manner, and was designed by local architect David Castle. The exterior features harken back to Spanish Colonial Revival and baroque traditions, and show fine workmanship and balance. The design elements of the interior display an exquisite decorative quality and wealth of imagination.

The large, two-story theater is rectangular in plan and measures 75 by 104 ft., with a height of 75 ft. Today the edifice is still structurally sound. Its walls are constructed of reinforced concrete and measure 13 in. in thickness. Stucco covers them on the interior, while brick with decoratively carved stone is the outside facing. The theater has a flat roof and contains no windows. The exterior has three openings which include the front entrance, an additional frontdoor, and a fire exit in the rear. The long axis of the theater is oriented east-west, with the main entrance facing east onto Cypress Street.

The relative simplicity and balanced composition of the east facade sets the exterior design apart somewhat from the eclectic style of the interior, which is more elaborate and decorative. The most impressive decorative element of the facade is a series of alternating rectangular plaques of polychrome terra cotta, located at the roof edge. These eight plaques show stylized and angular volute patterns surrounding either circular or crested emblems. The plaques are separated from each other by coursed pilasters with finial capitals. This kind of roof silhouette which is created by the regular alternation of the finials with the swan's-neck pediments of the plaques, is reminiscent both of early renaissance cresting and of the decorative Spanish baroque cartouches which enclose the royal arms.

Further defining the symmetrical scheme of the facade are two curvilinear end-gables bordered by pairs of identical pilasters with flat, stylized corbels and large finials. One occurs at each end of the roof line, and together they bound the decorated plaques. Centered within each of these shaped gables is a wide, arched, vent-type window with stone archivolt trim and a wrought-iron semicircular balconet. The vast, horizontal brick space between the decorated roofline and the marquee, which extends the full width of the theater, is pierced only by a receding, coursed-stone panel with arched trefoil crowns at each end, and a triple blind-arcade in the center. The arcade is composed of spiral, decorated columns with foliated capitals. Above the triple, slightly projecting arches is a course of three carved rosettes, each with a circular molding. The rosettes are separated from one another by short stone pilasters with finials.

The interior of the theater was built in the traditional proscenium shape with two straight, radial aisles dividing the seating area. The auditorium space itself, with a seating capacity of 1200, is dominated by a large proscenium arch spanning the breadth of the stage. This wide, elliptical arch is accented with spiral molding. A balcony is located on the second level and a mezzanine with arched colonnade encircles the lobby below.

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date entered

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The grandeur of the interior is most readily seen in the lighting and the architectural features of the north and south walls of the first floor, as well as the mezzanine. The arcades encircling the mezzanine are supported by massive, rectangular wooden piers with recessed panels. These are crowned with painted, foliated capitals. A carved wooden balustrade connects these piers and extends around the mezzanine. The exposed rafters of the ceiling are fancifully painted with triangular and other geometric designs. Both plain and elaborate brackets adorn the wall and support some of the rafter beams. On the interior first floor there exists a certain massiveness and solidity of design, combined with Spanish Colonial and classical Roman ornamentation. The plain, buff-colored walls contain an enclosed staircase which leads to the balcony from a small, domed structure with contiguous turret just left of the stage. The arcade walls of the circular, domed structure are enhanced by rich relief work and supported by Corinthian columns. The tall, polygonal turret has a stepped cupola decorated with painted scroll brackets, and contains niches and arched openings with grillwork and iron balconies similar to those on the exterior facade. The interior walls display alcoves which were once lighted and contained classical statues. Red roofing tiles cover the copings which are located above the stage and built into the side walls. Ornate curvilinear, foliated, and geometric relief-sculptures decorate the stage wall, the stuccoed balcony wall, and the first-floor ceiling below the balcony. They occur both in baroque and Art Deco styles.

Decorative lighting and numerous objets d'art imported from Italy complement the architectural design and establish the mood of the interior. Yet the illumination of walls and ceilings retain a Spanish flavor; lanterns adorn the inside walls and wrought-iron Spanish light fixtures hang from the mezzanine ceiling. Numerous Italian renaissance statues and paintings were bought for the theater and were originally displayed throughout. Many of them remain today. Ornate mirrors adorn the walls, although the wooden, inlaid furniture from Italy which once enhanced the mezzanine area was recently sold at auction. The interior remains largely intact and has been modified only slightly.

Exterior alterations and additions have occurred primarily at the first level. Areas on both sides of the theater were originally intended for use as shops. The north area functioned as a candy store and as a concession for the theater. In the 1950s the concession stand was moved inside the foyer and the box office, which had been located in the center of the facade, was moved to the northern shop area. In 1979, when the theater changed owners, the concessions were moved to the basement and the present sound system was added. In the same year, dressing rooms were constructed by Paramount Opry of Abilene, Inc. Other alterations include enclosing the orchestra pit and building a corridor to link the theater with the Wooten Hotel next door. Wooden entrance doors were also replaced by bronze-glass ones. The theater was said to have been the first air-conditioned building in town, and the cooling system was installed in a space originally reserved for a pipe organ.

The Paramount Theater is situated downtown; it is attached to the Wooten Hotel on the south, and to the Bell Telephone Building on the north. The hotel is in Art Deco style and is coeval with the theater. Both were financed by H. O. Wooten of Abilene. Contemporary banks are found to the north of the theater, while office buildings and a park are located to the south.

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Future plans for the Paramount Theater include its preservation as part of a fine-arts system to serve Abilene and West Texas. The goal of the Abilene Preservation League, which purchased the property on December 31, 1980, and worked to prevent the theater's destruction, is to restore the structure and develop it as a performance center with a schedule that will keep it in business.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1929 **Builder/Architect** David Castle

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Built in 1929 for the purpose of showing first-run movies and stage shows, the Paramount Theater survived the Great Depression and has remained a significant architectural and historical landmark in downtown Abilene for over fifty years. An excellent example of 20th-century theater design in Texas, the Paramount is one of the city's finest representations of eclectic commercial architecture. Its features represent both modern and period styles. Most noteworthy is the solid, yet lavish, design of the interior with its ornate relief sculpture, decorative Spanish lighting, and antique Italian furnishings. H. O. Wooten, who was a pioneer and civic leader interested in the economic and cultural growth of Abilene, built the Paramount as a memorial to the city, and to help change it from a wild-West cow town into a cultural center. Offering a diversified calendar of performing arts, the theater has always served the community and surrounding area well. Between 1930 and 1940, thousands of people traveled to Abilene to see both screen and stage productions at the Paramount.

H. O. Wooten was a genuine philanthropist whose active role in the growth and development of Abilene is evidenced not only in the construction of the Paramount Theater and Wooten Hotel, but in several other buildings which were erected in the downtown area. In 1890, Mr. Wooten established his grain business in Abilene and slowly began to build his fortune. After realizing that Abilene would soon be a distribution center for West Texas, Wooten established the H. O. Wooten Wholesale Grocery Co. This company, which operated profitably for more than fifty years, was invaluable to the newly developing community and the West Texas area.

A successful entrepreneur, H. O. Wooten's business interests were quite diverse; they included farming, ranching, and a railroad business. The Roscoe, Snyder, and Pacific Railroad, which was organized by Wooten, was owned by his family until the 1960s and still operates today. At one time Wooten served as director of the Federal Reserve Bank in Dallas. He was interested not only in the economic growth of Abilene, but in its cultural welfare as well. Wooten was instrumental in the establishment of McMurray College in Abilene and was the first president of the college's board of trustees.

The Paramount Theater, which opened in 1930 and was constructed at a cost of \$100,000, was built by Texas architect David Castle. Castle, who came to Abilene in 1914, designed numerous buildings throughout the state including civic, religious, and official structures. His architectural and engineering firm, D. S. Castle, Inc., is especially recognized for its superb hotel designs. Four of his hotels were built in Abilene, and one of them is currently being restored.

After fifty years of operation as a movie house, the Paramount was sold by the Wooten family to the Wooten Investment Co., in October 1979. The building was afterwards leased to the Paramount Opry of Abilene, Inc. After other unsuccessful business ventures, the Paramount was finally purchased by the Abilene Preservation League on December 31, 1980. The league plans to maintain and preserve the building as one of the older and more intact examples of the elaborate West-Texas movie palaces of the 1920s.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Abilene East, Tex

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	4	4	3	1	0	2	0	3	5	9	0	6	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

The building occupies all of Lot 4 and the north 27 ft. Lot 5, Block 22, Original Town of Abilene.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mrs. John Clark, President, Abilene Preservation League
Barbara C. Nagel, Research Assistant

organization Texas Historical Commission date February 15, 1980

street & number P. O. Box 12276 telephone (512) 475-3094

city or town Austin state Texas 78701

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 4 Nov. 1982

For NPS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

date 12/2/82

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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Abilene Daily Reporter, June 5, 1930.

Abilene Reporter-News, Sept. 3, 1978; Oct. 27, 1978; Oct. 12, 14, 1980;
Nov. 11, 1980.

Log of a Cowboy, Andy Adams, 1903. Houghton, Mifflin and Co. Boston and New
York.

Interview with Wally Aiken, August-September 1980.

Interview with Earl Wooten Jones, August 1980.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Substantive Review

Paramount Theater
Taylor County
TEXAS

Working No. 11/26/82-3097

Fed. Reg. Date: 2.1.83

Date Due: 12/24/82 - 1/10/83

Action: ACCEPT 12/27/82

RETURN

REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Photos are ~~old~~ old, but the description is very thorough adequately confirms that the photos accurately portray the current appearance of the theater. May be significant under A, too, if 50 yr. requirement is met - certainly it will in another 5 yrs.

Recom./Criteria Accept - C
 Reviewer Grubens
 Discipline Historian
 Date 12/17/82
 see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: technical corrections cited below
 substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Area of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- _____ summary paragraph
- _____ completeness
- _____ clarity
- _____ applicable criteria
- _____ justification of areas checked
- _____ relating significance to the resource
- _____ context
- _____ relationship of integrity to significance
- _____ justification of exception
- _____ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Geographic name _____

USIT Reference: _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

Title _____ Date _____

13. Other

- _____ Maps
- _____ Photographs
- _____ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: 202 272 - 3500

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



THE ABILENE GIFT SHOP

GROOVE TUBE

COMING CHRISTMAS
KING & THE GYPSIES

PARAMOUNT

NO PARKING
EXCEPT IN
MARKED SPACES

COMMERCIAL
BUILDING COMPANY

The Paramount Theater
Cypress Street, Abilene, Taylor County, Texas
photographer unknown, c. 1979
negative filed with Abilene Preservation League
East elevation, northwest oblique view
No. 1 of 8



STARS
H ERS

8PM
3 DOLLARS

GOOD
OLE
GOSPEL

F I R S T
F R I

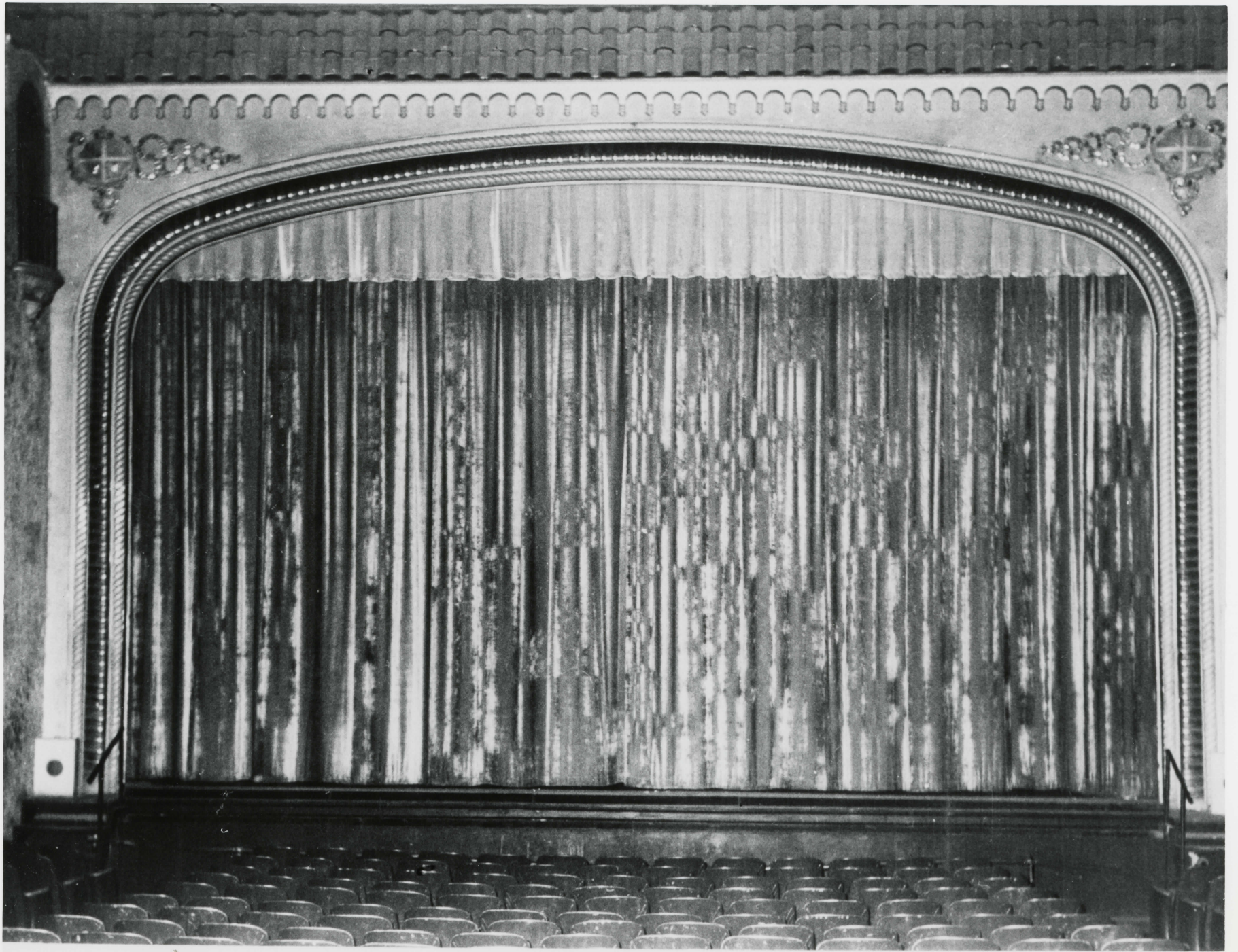
COUNTRY
MUSIC HALL

BLUEGRASS
3 RD
FRI & MO

THU
S
A T

TEXAS STARS
TOMORROW

The Paramount Theater
Cypress Street, Abilene, Taylor County, Texas
photographer unknown, c. 1979
negative filed with Abilene Preservation League
East elevation, detail of front facade, looking
west
No. 2 of 8



The Paramount Theater
Cypress Street, Abilene, Taylor County, Texas
photographer unknown, c. 1979
negative filed with Abilene Preservation League
Stage with proscenium arch, looking west
No. 3 of 8



The Paramount Theater
Cypress Street, Abilene, Taylor County, Texas
photographer unknown, c. 1979
negative filed with Abilene Preservation League
View of rectangular piers and painted beams of
mezzanine
No. 4 of 8



The Paramount Theater
Cypress Street, Abilene, Taylor County, Texas
photographer unknown, c. 1979
negative filed with Abilene Preservation League
Dome and tower to left of stage, looking south-
west
No. 5 of 8



Abilene TX

Facing Stage Balcony

The Paramount Theater
Cypress Street, Abilene, Taylor County, Texas
photographer unknown, 1970s
negative filed with Abilene Preservation League
Balcony and decorated ceiling under balcony, look-
ing east
No. 6 of 8



Framing Stage

The Paramount Theater
Cypress Street, Abilene, Taylor County, Texas
photographer unknown, 1970s
negative filed with Abilene Preservation League
Auditorium and stage, southwest oblique view
No. 7 of 8

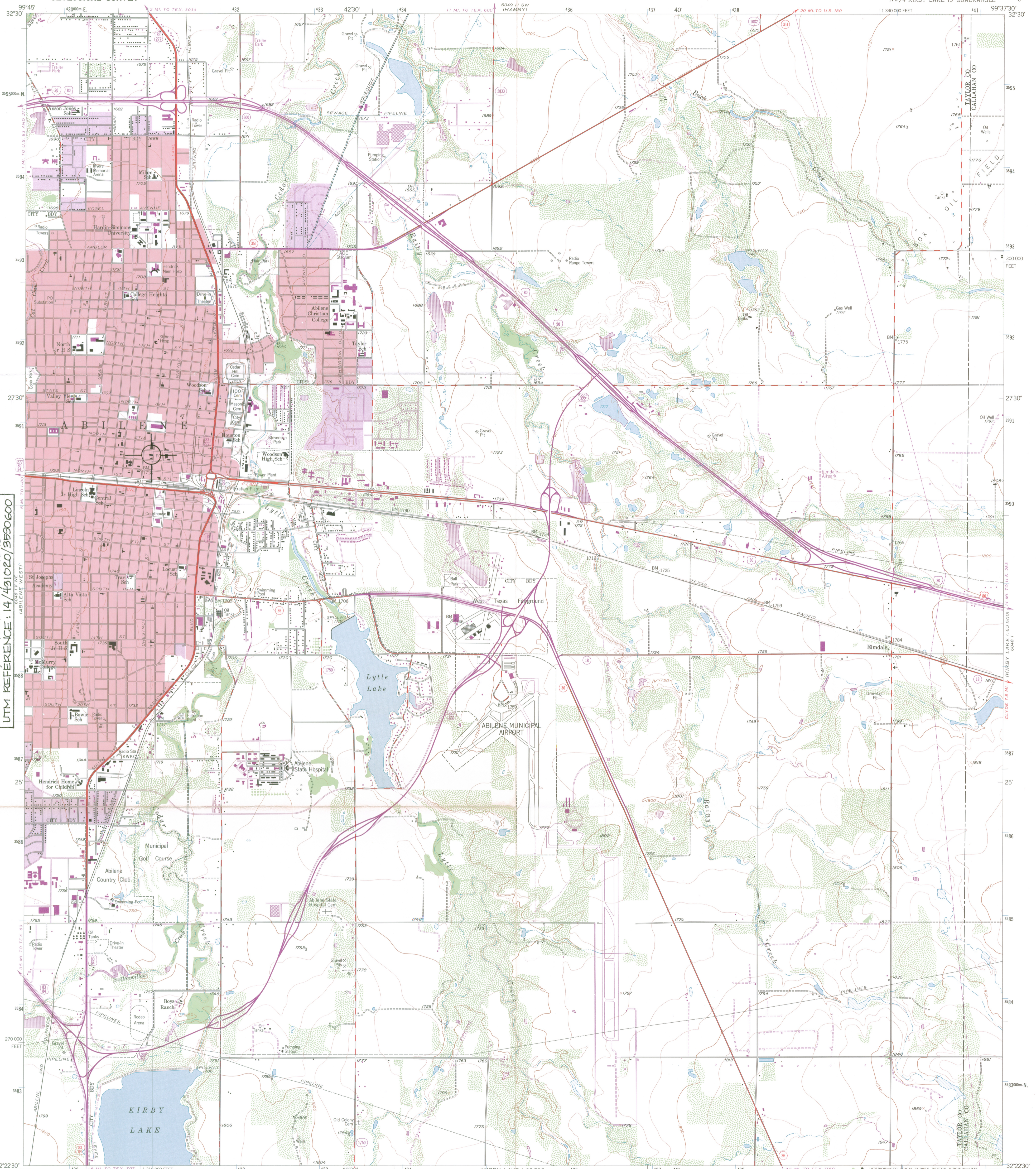
Abilene TX



The Paramount Theater
Cypress Street, Abilene, Taylor County, Texas
photographer unknown, 1970s
negative filed with Abilene Preservation League
Example of Italian statue used in decor
No. 8 of 8

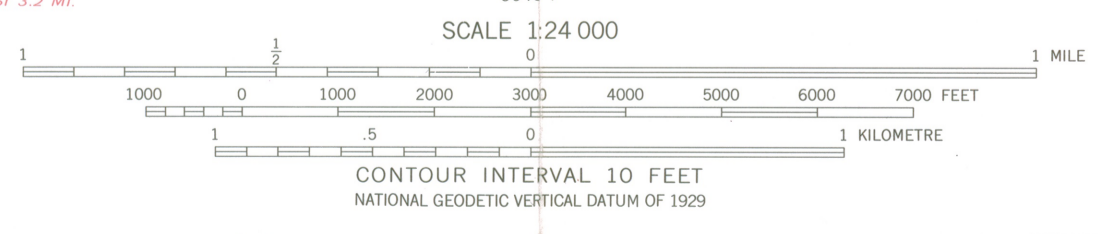
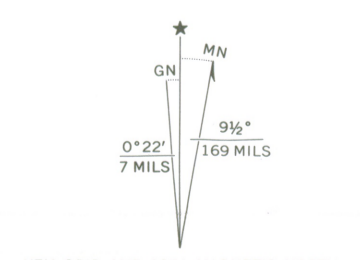
Example ~~ex~~

Abilene, Tx



PARAMOUNT THEATER
352 CYPRESS STREET
ABILENE, TAYLOR CO., TEXAS
UTM REFERENCE: 14/491020/3990600

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Topography from aerial photographs by ER 55 plotter
Aerial photographs taken 1954. Field check 1957
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system,
north central zone
1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 14, shown in blue
Red tint indicates areas in which only
landmark buildings are shown
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1967 and 1974. This information not field checked
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

3299-243

ABILENE EAST, TEX.
NW/4 KIRBY LAKE 15' QUADRANGLE
N3222.5-W9937.5/7.5
1957
PHOTOREVISED 1967 AND 1974
AMS 6048 1 NW - SERIES V882