NPS Form 10-900
(Oct.1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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FEB 11 2009
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Lincoln Theater

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 2300 South Central Avenue N/A ☐ not for publication

city or town Los Angeles N/A ☐ vicinity

state California code CA county Los Angeles code 037 zip code 90011

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date: 4 FEB 2009

California Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action: 3/17/2009

Lincoln Theater
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [x] private
- [ ] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

Historic Resources Associated with African Americans in Los Angeles

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE – Theater

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE - Theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19TH CENTURY – Exotic Revival - Moorish

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
roof Synthetic
walls Stucco, Concrete
other

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

8. Statement of Significance

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

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

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)
Ethnic Heritage - Black

Period of Significance
1926 - 1958

Significant Dates
1926 – Building Constructed

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Perrine, John Paxton; architect

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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

Primary Location of Additional Data
- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:
City of Los Angeles, Office of Historic Resources

Lincoln Theater
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property
Less than one acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	11	384639	3765776	3			
2				4			

☐ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)
Assessor Parcel Number 5119-007-001, which corresponds to the attached map.

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) The legal lot the building historically and currently occupies.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Teresa Grimes

organization Christopher A. Joseph & Associates date 6/01/08

street & number 523 W. 6th Street, Suite 1134 telephone (213) 417-4400

city or town Los Angeles state CA zip code 90014

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

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

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

Property Owner

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

name Mission Evangelica Juda Inc.

street & number P.O. Box 908 telephone

city or town Monrovia state CA zip code 91017

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

DESCRIPTION

The Lincoln Theater is located at the southeast corner of South Central Avenue and East 23rd Street in the City of Los Angeles. It is an outstanding example of an Exotic Revival style theater incorporating Moorish Revival and Islamic decorative elements. The reinforced concrete structure is composed of a series of masses with flat roofs. The function of the interior spaces is reflected in the massing. The front mass is three stories in height, sheathed in stucco, and occupied by the theater lobby and offices above. The middle mass is occupied by the auditorium and is surmounted by exposed, arched structural members. The rear mass is approximately four stories in height and contains the scenery and stage house. The front mass of the building is more highly articulated than the rear, which consists of mostly blank board-formed concrete walls. The building retains all aspects of integrity.

The front (east) elevation is symmetrically organized with the central bay occupied by the theater entrance and the two outer bays occupied by storefronts. Ornamentation and wall elements stay close to the façade in a low relief manner. The central bay rises from the ground to the roof. Each bay consists of three tiers. The ground floor has octagonal columns, which support intricate, multi-lobed archways. The columns rise about eight feet before a decorative, cast concrete design appears. Each freestanding column transitions into the building itself and turns into an attached column. Capping each column is an onion shaped capital, and decorative ceramic tile appears above each arch. The second tier has the most ornamentation with projecting piers, which delineate each bay. They are capped by onion shaped capitals and lance-shaped spires. Within each pier sits a decorative element in the shape of an elongated bottle inset with ceramic tile. Between each pier are three window openings with molded concrete sills separated by small columns. These columns, in turn, support multi-lobed arches over each window, and low relief onion domes with lance-shaped spires extend above the window bays. The third tier is unadorned except for the central bay.

The central bay, which supports the marquee, is the most fanciful and extravagant portion of the façade. The marquee is approximately 25 feet wide, extends about six feet outward, and defines the main entrance. The façade above the marquee creates the overall impression of a step-back tower in low relief, incorporating layers of arches and columns in keeping with the building's overall design.

The exterior arcade on the ground level spans the entire façade and is inset approximately ten feet with a terrazzo floor set in a diamond pattern of pink and yellow. Multi-lobed and multi-tiered arches span the interior of the arcade. Each entrance bay has a set of aluminum framed double doors with single glass panes, above which sit a multi-lobed ornamental arch topped with a rectangular frame.

The interior lobby is about 20 feet deep and spans the width of the entire structure. A 12-foot wide staircase is located in the center. About halfway up the stairway is a landing with stairs extending from each side to the second floor. Above this platform, on the wall facing the street once hung a large painting of Abraham Lincoln. The original cast-iron, ornamental railing leading up the lower portion of the stairway is still intact. The ceiling is split into three bays with decorative, gold-painted tablets within a square frame in each bay from which originally hung a light fixture. Four sets of double doors, two on each side of staircase, serve as the entrance to the theater space. Multi-lobed arches and brackets further embellish the building's lobby.

The double stairway leads to the second floor lobby. Inset into the walls as one climbs the stairs are decorative iron railings and multi-lobed arches creating false balconies. A complexly designed vent is located in the central bay of the lobby with a design consisting of circles inset in squares with flower shapes located within each circle. Offices are located on either side of this lobby. The mezzanine has seats set up in a standard fashion, rising continuously to the back of the theater.

The stage faces the back of the building and has been turned into a two-tiered setup to accommodate the church band. The walls surrounding the stage have been painted a sky pattern. The proscenium surround the stage continues the same Moorish ornamentation used throughout the building. Groupings of four columns on each side of the stage are painted to resemble green marble. They are topped with a carved entablature of multi-lobed brackets. The crown molding around the main auditorium space consists of a green band of arabesque design topped by a repetitive ornamental unit of gold painted sculptural pieces in a T-shape and a pink acorn shape that appears to hand from the bottom of the T. The ceiling is painted with intricate geometric designs in gold, green, and pink.

The highly sculpted and decorated sidewalls of the auditorium are set up in a bay and tier fashion. The first tier consists of two simple insets of a step back tower shape on each side nearest the stage. The second tier ornamentation is significantly more decorative. Square frames bind two multi-lobed arches with gold bulbs attached to each lobe end. A semi-circle along the bottom edge protrudes into the frame and has a series of five circles growing along it with decorated medallions within each. Above the arch is an intricately designed screen. Flanking the stage are single balcony structures with honeycombed patterned gold screens and topped with onion domes. Paired columns sit to the side of each balcony closet to the audience.

The exterior of the building is mostly unaltered with the following exceptions: the ground floor storefronts and doors have been replaced, a few of the second-story windows have been replaced, and a small addition was constructed on the south side of the building in 1981.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Lincoln Theater is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A as it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. It meets the registration requirements for theaters outlined in the Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) Form for Historic Resources Associated with African Americans in Los Angeles. It is significant at the local level in the context of entertainment and culture. Constructed in 1926, the Lincoln Theater is significant as the last remaining theater in Los Angeles that catered to the African American community. Owned and operated by a religious institution since 1962, it satisfies Criteria Consideration A as it derives its primary significance from its historical importance to the African American community.

Theaters not only showcased African American performers, but also provided entertainment venues, free of racial inequality, to the local community. African Americans were either excluded from theaters in downtown Los Angeles, or relegated to "colored only" seating sections. As a result, theaters granting equal access to African Americans were one of the many commercial enterprises that developed along Central Avenue. There were at least five theaters along the Central Avenue corridor: the Lincoln, Globe, Tivoli, Angelus, and Hub. The largest of these was the Lincoln Theater.

The Lincoln Theater opened in 1927 and immediately became a major gathering spot for the large and growing African American population along the Central Avenue corridor. The theater was constructed by West Coast Theaters. The board of directors included Mike Gore, Adolph Ramish, Sol Lesser, and Joseph Schenk. It hosted a variety of stage shows, plays, concerts, talent shows, vaudeville, and film. It was often referred to as the "West Coast Apollo" because it featured many of the same acts as the Apollo Theater in Harlem. The opening featured Curtis Mosby's Dixieland Blue Blowers and the film *Rose of the Golden West*, starting Mary Astor and Gilbert Roland. It served as a key site in jazz history, featuring such performers as Lionel Hampton, Duke Ellington, Nat Cole, Fats Domino, Sammy Davis Jr., and BB King.

The Lincoln Theater attracted many white patrons as well as black. A columnist for the Los Angeles Times observed "many white people crowd in because the chance to see negro actors of real ability appearing for their own people rather than appearing as negros from the white man's point of view is one that doesn't come to one in every city."[1] One of the main attractions of the Lincoln Theater was the Lafayette Players. Founded in 1915 by Anita Busch, the Lafayette Players provide dramatic entertainment for the Harlem community in place of minstrel shows that often ridiculed blacks. In 1928 they moved to Los Angeles and became the stock company at the Lincoln. The troupe included well-known black actors such as Clarence Muse, Charles Gilpin, and Abbie Mitchell.

[1] Shippey, Lee, "Lee Side of LA," *Los Angeles Times*, 5/2/1928, p. A4.

In 1962, the Lincoln Theater was officially sold to the First Jurisdiction of the Church of God in Christ and dedicated "The Crouch Temple" by Bishop Samuel M. Crouch. After Crouch's death in 1976, the headquarters was moved to Crenshaw. The Lincoln Theater is now under co-ownership with the Mission Evangelica Juda and serves as a church under the Iglesia de Cristo Ministeries Juda led by Pastor Alberto Wizel.

Although the building is not being nominated under Criterion C, it is important to note that it was designed by architect John Paxton Perrine who worked extensively in southern California. Perrine was notable for his lavish theater buildings in Art Deco, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Moorish Revival styles. In 1928, he designed the opulent California Theater in San Bernardino, which combined Spanish Colonial and Moorish Revival styles. Built to present vaudeville acts as well as motion pictures, Will Rogers made his final public appearance there in 1935. Other theaters by Perrine include the California Theater in San Diego (1926), the Roosevelt Theater in Hawthorne (1926), and the Fox Theater in Redondo Beach (1927).

REFERENCES

Building Permits

Sanborn Map, 1950, vol. 4

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument Application, 2002

Cox, Bette. *Central Avenue: Its Rise and Fall*. Los Angeles: BEEM Publications, 1996.

Reed, Tom. *The Black Music History of Los Angeles*. Los Angeles: Black Accent on L.A. Press, 1992.

"Lincoln Theater Opens Tomorrow, *Los Angeles Examiner*, 10/6/1927, pt. 2, p. 5.

"Lincoln Theater Will Open Friday," *Los Angeles Times*, 10/5/1927, pt. II, p. A9.

"Colored play cast returns to LA house, Lafayette Players will present another group of legitimate plays at Lincoln Theater," *Hollywood Citizen News*, 6/1/1932, p. 7.

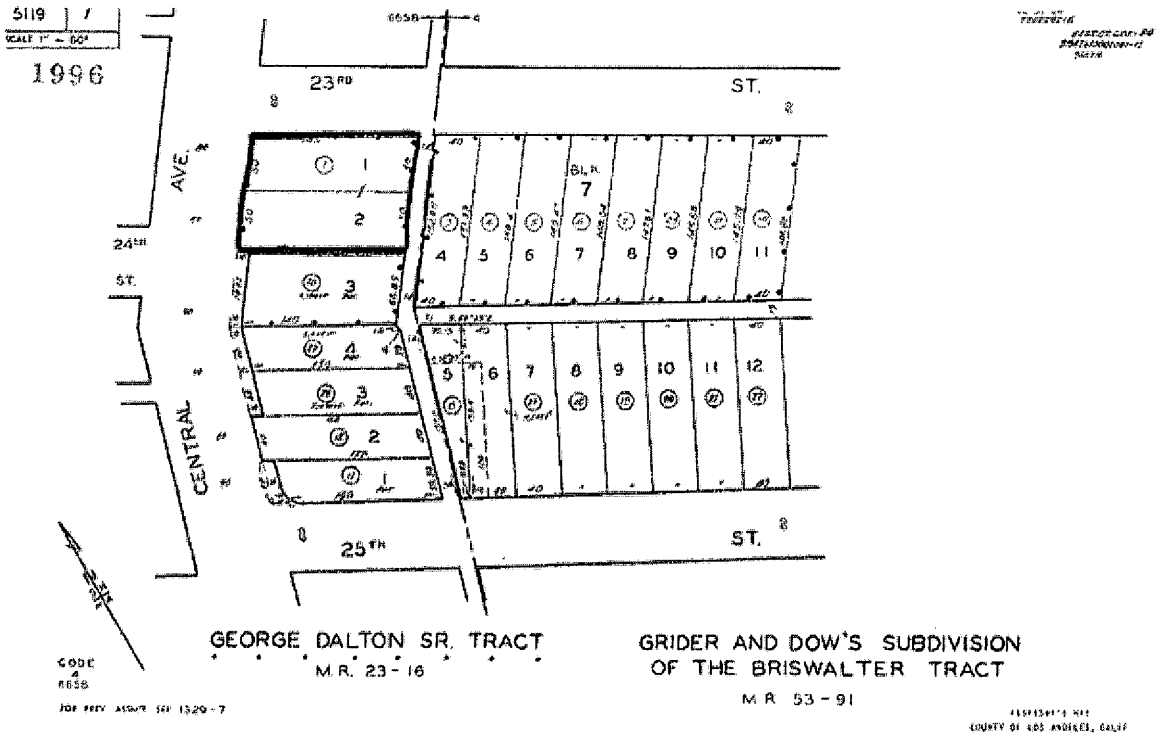
"Grand premiere at Lincoln Theater, new stage show policy," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 7/3/1946, p. 18.

"Lionel Hampton Band in town, to play Lincoln Theater," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 8/8/1946, p. 18.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

SKETCH MAP



Property boundary outlined in bold
Source: Los Angeles County Tax Assessor

NPS Form 10-900a
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section _____ Page ___

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 09000149 Date Listed: 3/17/2009

Lincoln Theater — Property Name
Los Angeles — County
CA — State

Historic Resources Associated with African Americans in Los Angeles MPS
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action: 3/17/09

Amended Items in Nomination:

Geographical Data:

The correct U.T.M. Reference Coordinates are: *11 384333 3764935*

These clarifications were confirmed with the CA SHPO office.

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

SERVICIO GENERAL
SABADO 7PM
DOMINGO 10AM Y 6PM
JOVENES JUEVES 7PM
DAMAS JUEVES 7 PM
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