



Name of Property: Norman Film Manufacturing Company
City, State: Jacksonville, Florida
Period of Significance: 1923-1930
NHL Criteria: 1
NHL Theme: III. Expressing Cultural Values
2. Visual and Performing Arts
4. Mass Media
6. Popular and Traditional Culture
Previous Recognition: None
National Historic Context: XXI. Motion Pictures
H. Producing (Studios, Sets, Locations)

NHL Significance:

- Norman Film Manufacturing Company is a rare, extant silent film studio. While a few other film studios that operated during the silent era still exist in other parts of the United States, Norman Film Manufacturing Company never transitioned to sound production.
- Richard E. Norman used Norman Film Manufacturing Company as a location for the production and distribution of race films, those that were made for African-American audiences, for exhibition in African-American theaters and featuring African-American actors. While films for white audiences cast African Americans in lesser roles characterized by subservience or savagery, race films featured African Americans in leading roles as agents of action and change within the film. Norman Film Manufacturing Company is the only surviving race film studio in America.
- During the early era of film production, Florida, and in particular Jacksonville, was a



“winter film capital” hosting a number of studios based in New York, and on-site facilities allowed year-round production of films.

Integrity:

- Norman Film Manufacturing Company conveys a strong sense of time and place. All five original studio buildings are intact and retain their historic design, massing, and overall plan on the site, allowing it to convey the history of early twentieth-century filmmaking.
- Rehabilitation was completed on the property in 2007. Termite damage and dry rot led to a high degree of deterioration and concerns about structural integrity in some buildings. Restoration work was completed based on historic photos of the property. When necessary, materials were replaced in-kind.
- Each of the studio buildings retains its original character as it did during the period of significance. The fenestration on one of the buildings has been altered to accommodate a religious community.
- Two elements of the original site are no longer extant. The studio water tower no longer remains but the footings are still evident on the property. The studio pool, used for water scenes, is no longer visible. It was in-filled after the period of significance and has archaeological potential.

Owner of Property: Two owners: City of Jacksonville and Circle of Faith Ministries

Acreage of Property: 1

Origins of Nomination:

- In collaboration with the National Historic Landmarks (NHL) Program, the nomination was written as part of a graduate-level course at the University of Central Florida

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- Designation will increase public awareness of African-American participation in silent films and the race film industry. Jacksonville is also home to a reconstructed 1929 African-American theater, the Ritz Theatre. Designation will allow for greater interpretation of this facet of African-American life in the Jim Crow South.
- Designation will increase public awareness of Jacksonville’s role in the silent film era. While many know that Jacksonville was a “winter film capital,” hosting a number of studios based in New York during the winter months, few understand that Jacksonville had its own studios and production houses year round.
- Designation will encourage the preservation of Norman Film Manufacturing Company and accelerate the creation of a city park on the site to include a silent film museum. The City of Jacksonville, Norman Studios Museum, and several neighborhood, and community organizations are interested in seeing the studio open to the public.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.



Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Allan moved, Dr. Mills seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 11/20/15):

Barrett and Elizabeth King, St. Marys, Georgia

Ithiell B. Yisrael, Executive Producer, Iron Rock Films, Jacksonville, Florida

Bob and Lindsay Reiss, Jacksonville, Florida

Lori N. Boyer, Council Member, District 5, City of Jacksonville, Florida

Steve Matchett, President, Old Arlington, Inc., Jacksonville, Florida

Elizabeth Rafferty, Jacksonville Beach, Florida

Ander Crenshaw, Florida 4th District, United States House of Representatives, Washington, DC

Todd Roobin, Manager, Jacksonville Film & Television, Jacksonville, Florida

Barbara Tapa Lupack, Ph.D., New York Public Scholar (2015-2017)

David W. Norman (grandson), Tallahassee, Florida

Gloria W. Norman Kohlmann (granddaughter), President, Morning Glory Inspirations, Inc., Longwood, Florida

James J. Broomall, Ph.D., Director, George Tyler Moore Center for the Study of the Civil War, Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, West Virginia

William H. Bishop, III, AIA, Vice President, Jacksonville, Florida

The Honorable Bill Nelson, U.S. Senator, Washington, DC

Tony Allegretti, Executive Director, Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville, Florida

Michael E. Lawson, Jacksonville, Florida

The Honorable Corrine Brown, Florida 5th District, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC

Barry Underwood, Chairman, Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission, Florida

Council of the City of Jacksonville, Resolution 2015-719-A, "A Resolution Supporting the Designation of the Norman Silent Film Studios in Jacksonville as a National Historic Landmark," Florida

Advisory Board Recommendation: