NPS Form 10-900

OMB No. 1024-0018

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1153

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction 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 an 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 The Woodward Theater

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 818 Main [N/A] not for publication

city or town Woodward [N/A] vicinity

state Oklahoma code OK county Woodward code 153 zip code 73801

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Bob Blackburn, State Historic Preservation Officer — 10-20-08

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

Oklahoma Historical Society

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 certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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
  - ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ other, explain
  - ☐ See continuation sheet.

for Edson H. Beall — Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action 12.4.08

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 count previously listed resources.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Theater
COMMERCE: Business
COMMERCE: Specialty store

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY REVIVALS: Italian Renaissance

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
roof ASPHALT
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.)

[x] **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.

[x] **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 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)

ARCHITECTURE
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Periods of Significance
1929-1957

Significant Dates
1929

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

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Bailey, Leonard S. -- architect
L. S. Fisher & Company -- builders

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(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:
Oklahoma Historical Society/SHPO

The Woodward Theater
Name of Property

Woodward, Oklahoma
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14S	465141	4032387
2.			
3.			
4.			

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sarah McBride, intern/Lynda Schwan, architectural historian

organization Oklahoma Historical Society date June 11, 2008

street & number 2401 N. Laird Ave. telephone 405-522-4478

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73105

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Woodward Arts and Theatre Council, Inc.

street & number P.O. Box 1523 telephone

city or town Woodward state OK zip code 73802

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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Summary

The Woodward Theater, built in 1929, is a two-story concrete and brick Italian Renaissance style theater. Located in downtown Woodward, Oklahoma, the theater is similar in size to many of the surrounding buildings. The center of the façade rises several feet above the rest of the roofline and is ornamented on either side by scroll brackets and has a marquee typical of movie theaters from the late-1940s to 1950s. The interior has a lobby, mezzanine, large auditorium, wide stage, projection room, and dressing rooms in the basement. The second floor above the lobby is divided into several rooms.

Setting

The Woodward Theater was built in 1929 with the Italian Renaissance style. It is located in the commercial area in downtown Woodward, Oklahoma. The theater stands out from the surrounding downtown core that is typically of the one- and two-story Commercial style buildings.

Exterior Description

The theater is a two-story brick structure measuring 48 feet by150 feet. The façade faces south. It has architectural embellishments that exhibit the distinctive Italian Renaissance style.

The façade, south elevation, has a central entry for the theatre with store fronts on either side. Each store front is constructed with replacement metal and glass doors with large plate glass display windows. The theatre entrance has two metal and glass doors, each with a transom window. Applied to the first floor wall surface are three inch ceramic tiles. The second floor has three sets of three two-over-two double hung windows with stone sills and lintels. Located between the central windows are brick pilasters capped with stone capitals. The flat roof is concealed behind a brick and stone parapet. The decorative parapet rises in the center with decorative stone brackets and cornice. The cornice has a brick frieze with two decorative stone flowers each placed in a stone circle. The cornice rests on the capitals of the pilasters.

The theatre has historic signage running parallel between the first and second floors. This is a large metal and neon marquee that is utilized for advertisements. Running perpendicular to the building, directly in the center, is a large neon and metal sign with the theatre name "Woodward".

Portions of the east and west elevations are concealed by adjacent buildings. Neither of these elevations have any openings; they are a solid red brick wall. The rear, north, elevation has a metal door at each corner of the first floor. The remainder of the elevation has no ornamentation. The north elevation rises above the surrounding buildings as it houses the stage on the interior of the building.

Interior Description

The first floor includes the lobby for the theater and two stores on either side that open to the street. The lobby continues toward the back of theater and widens. Staircases are located to the left and right and both go up to the mezzanine. Adjacent to the left staircase is the men's restroom and next to the right staircase is the women's restroom. The lobby extends to an alcove that has entrances on either side that open to the auditorium. Adjacent to the men's bathroom is a storage room.

The floor of the auditorium slopes down towards the proscenium. There are sixteen rows of seating with a total of 326 seats. The proscenium has two stairs on either end and there are also enclosed stairs adjacent. To the rear of the proscenium back wall is a staircase to the basement. Decorative details from the auditorium include applied plaster leaves and wreathes, faux balconies, pendant

lighting and a mezzanine.

The second floor maintains the historic pattern. It includes three rooms; each room has opaque windows, a glass and wood door and a transom window on the hallway wall. In the basement, there are four portraits dating to 1933 and 1934 of animated characters and actors. The murals are signed by Kemoha (George Patrick Patterson). Kemoha is associated with the Apache/Seneca and is identified as a Native American painter. He is cited as painting over 500 portraits.

Alterations

Based on Sanborn maps, the theater originally had a recessed central entry. While the current entrance is still recessed, it is closer to the street than the historic entrance. The storefronts have also been altered with modern windows and doors. The openings remain intact with no alterations to the original dimensions. Windows on the second floor have been replaced but maintain the historic window dimensions.

The building retains a high degree of integrity. Its location, setting, feeling and association are intact. While the workmanship suffers, from the replacement of the storefront windows and doors, this is common on commercial structures in Woodward and does not impact the overall integrity.

SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Woodward Theater is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its social contributions to the community and Criterion C for its architectural significance as an Italian Renaissance style atmospheric theater. The theater is located in Woodward, Oklahoma and was built in 1929. It was designed by Leonard S. Bailey and built by L. S. Fisher & Co. As a theater built during the age of the "movie palaces", it is a prime example of a small town's contribution to the unique and eclectic architecture of movie theaters of the time. Furthermore, the theater served as a source of entertainment and relief for the people of Woodward from its opening day, through the Great Depression and World War II and continued later even when televisions began to take the place of theaters.

Background

The City of Woodward is the county seat of Woodward County and is the largest city in northwestern Oklahoma. Located in the northwest corner of the state, adjacent to the panhandle, Woodward boasts a population of nearly 15,000. It is located on the bank of the North Canadian River, just down river from Camp (later Fort) Supply, a military establishment created during George Custer's Indian Campaign of 1868.

Woodward had its beginnings in 1887 when the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroad established a siding and roundhouse at a point along their line through western Oklahoma from Kiowa, Kansas and into the panhandle of Texas. Though one of a number of sidings placed along the route though the Cherokee Outlet, the Woodward siding soon became the most important; it became the primary shipping point for freight going in and out of Fort Supply, twelve miles to the west. The siding was located near the military road that connected Fort Supply with Cantonment and Fort Reno, to the southwest. Although the Cherokee Outlet would not be opened for settlement until 1893, the Woodward siding attracted a number of businesses catering to both the military traffic and to the cattle ranches that leased Outlet land.

Woodward, whose name origin is disputed, nonetheless received a post office in February, 1893, six months before the Outlet was opened to settlement. Woodward was selected as a Government Land Office location in preparation for the land run, which commenced at noon on September 16, 1893. The Land Office was located in the center of a government plat, which, due to a survey error, was located west of the already established Santa Fe depot, roundhouse, and siding. The first day of the run, a townsite was claimed and platted on the 160 acres that surrounded the depot, creating rival towns. Denver, as the rival plat was named, was oriented to the rail line; Woodward to the cardinal directions. Where the two plats abutted, there was created a jog that remains today at Division Street.

Woodward and Denver, later East Woodward, were eventually joined into one entity, spurred on by the relocation of the Santa Fe depot to a spot near Division Street. And while trade with Fort Supply was an initial economic driving force for the town, it was agriculture and cattle ranching that became the basis for the local economy. The town, located on a major railroad, became a shipping point not only for cattle, but for carload after carload of broomcorn, kaffir corn, and later wheat. In 1912, the Wichita Falls & Northwestern (later the M-K-T) railroad pushed into Woodward from the south, linking the area to markets such as Fort Worth and Oklahoma City (via Elk City).

Woodward experienced steady, if unspectacular growth. In seven years, from the Run of 1893 to the census of 1900, more than 2,000 people called the city home. By 1920, that number had almost

doubled. At the end of World War II, nearly 6,000 people lived within the city limits. The year 1947 brought a defining moment t o the city; a tornado swept from southwest to northeast through the heart of Woodward. The April 9, 1947 tornado flattened 200 square blocks and killed over 100 citizens. Residential areas and much of downtown suffered incredible damage, but the "western resilience" of this old frontier town led the people of Woodward to rebuild. The city continued to grow, spurred on by oil and gas field discoveries in the 1950s and 1960s until the population settled in around 15,000 in the mid 1990s.

Entertainment and Recreation

Theaters of the early twentieth century were built with grandeur only the rich could afford, but the audience included both the rich and poor. While architects of the time often criticized the over-the-top eclectic styles present in the theaters, the luxurious settings were exactly what the audiences wanted. Prior to the introduction of television, movies were the ultimate source of entertainment for all ages, classes, and genders. The audiences could get a visual representation of the latest news or watch Babe Ruth hit a homerun without leaving their hometown. While movie ticket sales diminished during the Great Depression, many people literally spent their last dime to go to a movie where they could escape the sad reality of their lives.

Theaters were intentionally built with a conspicuously different façade from any of the surrounding buildings. The most distinctive feature was an enormous marquee that spanned the width of the building and hung over the wide sidewalk and entranceway. Anybody walking along the street a few blocks away would know where the theater was because there usually was also a vertical marquee that projected multiple feet away from the façade and towered over the horizontal marquee. Various types of light bulbs would be used to attract attention from passerby including traser and chaser light bulbs and rows of stud lights used to outline the ornamental shapes of the facades.

The Woodward Theater was built in 1929 by two brothers, D. Vance Terry and Ben Terry who were already in the entertainment business and wanted to have a theater for the new "talkies". Slightly skeptical of the longevity of movies, they included all of the necessities for a vaudeville show as well, such as dressing rooms and a larger space behind the proscenium. For this reason the building, unique even for movie palaces, was capable of functioning as either a movie house or a vaudeville stage.

The year the theater was built was devastating for the nation and the world as the Wall Street Crash of 1929 ushered in the Great Depression. Woodward benefited from many of the New Deal programs such as the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps, but agricultural production and banks severely suffered. The city lost three of its banks during this time. Movie attendance may have decreased around the nation, but the Woodward Theater was able to stay open. Unlike some other towns and cities in Oklahoma, the people in Woodward remained rather than search for opportunities elsewhere. Maintaining its population during this time, undoubtedly, helped keep many of the Woodward businesses, including the theater, open. The theater helped to relieve some of the frustration of the people of Woodward and the surrounding areas.

Despite the outbreak of war in 1941, the Woodward Theater flourished. The Great Depression may have ended, but the people in Woodward and around the country continued to need an escape from their troubles. The theater offered a break from reality with a lavish atmosphere and stories about beautiful people struggling to cope with their own problems only to find there is always a happy ending or a message of perseverance.

The war ended in 1945, but the people of Woodward would only have two years of peace before tragedy would strike again. On April 9, 1947, in less than five minutes, over 200 blocks of the city were destroyed or badly damaged and 104 people were dead. The F5 tornado that had winds at 212 miles per hour was the deadliest in Oklahoma history. The tornado cut a track from the southwest corner of town to the northeast side before it lifted back into the clouds. There was no warning for people of Woodward as they attended Wednesday evening church services, watched movies in the downtown theaters, and relaxed at home by the radio. The destruction of the west and north sides of the city was so complete that many returning residents could not locate the exact spot where their homes once stood. The downtown business district suffered heavily as well, with many businesses destroyed and damaged, windows and doors blown away, cars stacked like firewood, and many dead and wounded lining the streets. With all of this destruction and devastation, surprisingly the Woodward Theater had a relatively low amount of damage. The owners already planned to install a new, modern marquee, and the tornado only sped this along when it destroyed the original.

The late-forties had been the peak for the movie industry. From the 1950s on, movie attendance was never the same. The downtown movie theater was no longer the best source of entertainment or news. Television made it possible for people to remain at home in the comfort of their living room watching entertaining shows. News could be watched daily rather than only when a person decided to go to the movies. Somehow, the Woodward Theater continued to flourish, although later the building's use as a movie theater would no longer be necessary. The building was originally built for both movies and vaudeville shows, and in the late twentieth century, the Woodward easily converted into a fulltime stage theater.

The Woodward Theater is the only extant example of a theater in Woodward that served as both a vaudeville house and movie theater. At a time when the country was needing an alternate source of entertainment, the Woodward Theater played a vital role in the community. Due to its social role in the community it is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, at the local level of significance.

Architecture

The Italian Renaissance style of the theater is a direct contrast to the popular styles of the time for commercial buildings; Classical Revival, Beaux Arts, Commercial which were the typical styles used in this time period in Oklahoma. The theater uses Italian Renaissance vocabulary including a flat roof concealed by a prominent cornice, a varying wall material on the first and second floors, a symmetrical façade, and accents of small classical columns or pilasters. The form of the building is referred to by Richard Longstreth in his 1987 book The Buildings of Main Street as a one-part commercial block, "a simple box with a decorated façade and thoroughly urban in overtones" and specific to theaters, that they were "conspicuous because of both façade features and appended signs."

The Woodward Theater was part of a tradition in movie house design that was begun in the early 1920's. The theater combined Italian Renaissance architectural characteristics to create fantasy themes. These themes included the faux balconies, decorative plaster motifs, heavy drapery on the stage and complex lighting patterns. Complicated color schemes also played an important role in achieving the desired effect.

The Woodward Theater is the only example of Italian Renaissance architecture in Woodward. Its location on a prominent block in downtown adds to its presence in the city. It is a prominent building in the downtown due to its massing, architectural style and varying building materials. It retains a high degree of historic integrity and is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under

Criterion C, at the local level of significance.

The Woodward Theater is a local icon, a reminder of an era when the theater itself was part of the spectacle of the movies. A locally notable example of the Italian Renaissance style, the Woodward Theater is a well-preserved example of this quickly disappearing type of entertainment venue. It retains a high degree of historic integrity and warrants inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

James, Louise Boyd. "Woodward: First Century on the Sand-Sage Prairie 1887-1987." *The Chronicles of Oklahoma.* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society) Volume 64, Number 3, Fall 1986.

Lester, Patrick D. The Biographical Directory of Native American Painters. (Tulsa, OK: University of Oklahoma Press) 1995.

Longstreth, Richard. The Buildings of Main Street; A Guide to American Commercial Architecture. (Washington, DC: the Preservation Press) 1987.

Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey. *Draft Final Survey Report: Architectural/Historical Reconnaissance Level Survey of Certain Portions of the City of Woodward.* (Stillwater; Oklahoma State University Department of History) 1995.

Oklahoma Today. Picture Palaces Play Return Engagements. Volume 32, number 4, 1982, pg 18-20.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Company. *Woodward, Oklahoma.* 1920, 1933, 1937.

Woodward Democrat. (Woodward, Oklahoma) 21 February 1913; 28 February 1913; 29 April 1921.

Woodward News-Bulletin (Woodward, Oklahoma) 22 November 1918; 30 May 1919; 13 June 1919; 2 January 1920; 15 April 1921.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

East ½ of Lot 7 and the West ½ of Lot 8, Block 55 in downtown Woodward, Oklahoma

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This boundary includes the property historically associated with the Woodward Theater.

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-4 except as noted:

Photographer: Sarah McBride
Date of Photographs: 30 August 2007

No.		Subject	Dir.	Date
0001	South elevation		N	30 August 2007
0002	South elevation		W	30 August 2007
0003	Interior			30 August 2007
0004	Basement Murals			30 August 2007

WOODWARD
SPONSORED BY
BARBER SHOP
Josie Adams
YUKON

WOODWARD

KEMOHA
1934
Apr
34
AMOS
ANDY