

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Alhambra Theatorium

AND/OR COMMON

Alhambra Theatre

## 2 LOCATION

STREET &amp; NUMBER

50 Adams Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Eighth (Joel Deckard)

STATE

Indiana

VICINITY OF

CODE

18

COUNTY

Vanderburgh

CODE

163

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

## CATEGORY

DISTRICT

X BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

X PRIVATE

BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

OCCUPIED

X UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

X NO

## PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

X ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Alan N. Shovers

STREET &amp; NUMBER

305 Union Federal Building

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

VICINITY OF

STATE

Indiana

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Vanderburgh County Recorder

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Civic Center Complex

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

STATE

Indiana

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

National Register - Determined Eligible

DATE

26 May 1977

X FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

National Register of Historic Places

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT  
☒ GOOD  
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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#### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Alhambra Theater, situated at the northeast corner of Parrett Street and Adams Avenue, was built in 1913 by Louis Wallenberger and Henry Heilman. It housed, at that time, a 350 seat theater with cigar and confectionary shops in the front (Adams Avenue elevation).

The building comprises two sections: a facade block two stories high, three bays wide (approximately 50') and one bay deep; and theater extension three bays wide and three bays deep, divided by pilasters. The mass of the facade block was originally balanced by a marquise over the entrance to the theater which has since been removed. The walls of the facade are finished in yellow and brown brick with limestone trim. The brown brick is glazed and is used in the ornamental patterns such as in string courses, horseshoe-arched windows, and the header bond panels over the windows in the central bay. The walls of the theater extension are common brick.

The main elevation was originally divided into three voids on the first floor, a central recessed entrance flanked by shop windows of approximately the same dimensions. The arched glazing has since been removed and the first floor has been sheathed in limestone. The second floor bays contain compound window units, tripartite in the central bay and paired in the two faces of the end bays. The convex hipped roofs in the end bays are currently sheathed in saphalt or asbestos shingles, and the flat areas are presumably built-up roofing.

## 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 checked="" 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 June-September 1913

BUILDER/ARCHITECT F. J. Schlotter

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Alhambra Theatre represents an important passage in Evansville's history in several regards. First, the building furnishes an important insight into the later work of one of the city's major architects. Next, the theatre presents one of the city's few examples of pre-World War romantic eclecticism. And last, the Alhambra symbolizes the ascendancy of motion picture entertainment in Evansville.

The "Alhambra Theatorium" was dedicated on Saturday afternoon, 27 September 1913, and designed by Frank J. Schlotter. A native of Evansville, Schlotter (1864-1943) began his architectural career in the local office of Reid Brothers. James and Merritt Reid (1851-1943 and 1854-1932, respectively) were nearing the peaks of their professional lives in 1882 when Schlotter joined them at the age of eighteen as an apprentice draftsman. After four years together, the Reids were on their way to San Diego and construction of the Hotel del Coronado, and Schlotter embarked his own career. (In 1896, Schlotter purchased the remains of the Reids's Evansville practice.)

Schlotter was not a stranger to architectural exoticism. The Moorish motifs of the Alhambra recall the horseshoe arches and pepper pot domes of his work from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Schlotter produced some of the most vivid Queen Anne residences in the entire city. Homes in the Riverside district (National Register, 1978) such as 606 S.E. First (1896) or 810 S.E. First (c. 1897) illuminate the origins of Schlotter's eclecticism. The domical belfry of his 1888 Hose House #10 was an even earlier example of Schlotter's fondness for bizarre forms.

The audiences in attendance at the opening of the Alhambra, however, took the theatre's alien look in stride. Movie theatres sought to create a total environment of escape and entertainment, and theatre designers such as John Eberson (1875-1954) developed a specialty in the 1920's by producing an architecture of fantasy and atmosphere.

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The Alhambra would be built of "buff and dark brown mission brick" along the lines of "a Moorish castle." The roof would be surmounted by two domes in "Arabian style," and the interior would be carried out "in keeping with the Moorish design." The folding seats, pressed metal ceiling, and sconces combined to evoke a sense of faraway places.

The speedy construction of the Alhambra may have set a record. The announcement of Schlotter's plans was made in late March of 1913. One month later, a rendering of the facade was published, and on 25 May 1913 the awarding of the contract for construction was reported. The contractors, Scarborough & Davis, broke ground soon after for the \$18,000 building. In late June the newspaper declared that the Alhambra was "rising quickly" and added that the optimistic owners, Louis Wollenberger and Henry Heliman, planned a mid-July opening. Despite its taking another two months to complete, the Alhambra's 120-day course of construction was nevertheless remarkable.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"A Theatre Dims Houselights for Last Time," Evansville Courier, February 3, 1956

Evansville Courier, February 17, 1977, p.17.

Evansville Press, February 17, 1977, p. 5.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Evansville South

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 450295 4201580  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B           
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Goodsell's Enlargement, Block One, western 75 feet of lots 45, 46, 47, 48

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Laurie R. Hammel, Joan Marchand, and Douglas L. Stern

ORGANIZATION

Department of Metropolitan Development

DATE

25 May 1979

STREET & NUMBER

Rm. 304 Civic Center Complex

TELEPHONE

(812)426-5487

CITY OR TOWN

Evansville

STATE

Indiana

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

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 Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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"To Build Theater." Evansville Journal-News,

"Alhambra Going Up." Evansville Journal -News, 22 June 1913.

"Alhambra Opens With Crowds Saturday." Evansville Journal-News,  
28 September 1913.

"Contract Is Let For Theatorium At 3d And Adams." Evansville Journal-News, 25 May 1913

"To Build Theater." Evansville Journal-News, 23 May 1913.

Reflections Upon a Century of Architecture. Evansville: Junior League  
of Evansville, Inc., 1977.