

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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

1. Name

historic Murray Theater

and/or common Richmond Civic Theater/ Norbert Silbiger Theater

2. Location

street & number 1003 Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Richmond N/A vicinity of congressional district Tenth

state Indiana code 018 county Wayne code 177

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

4. Owner of Property

name RichmondCivic Theater

street & number 1003 Main Street

city, town Richmond N/A vicinity of state Indiana 47374

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Auditor's Office, Wayne County Courthouse Office Annex

street & number Wayne County Courthouse Office Annex

city, town Richmond state Indiana 47374

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Comprehensive Cultural Resources Inventory of Richmond has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1978 federal state county local

depository for survey records School of Architecture, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana
State Historic Preservation Office, Indianapolis, Indiana

city, town Muncie/Indianapolis state Indiana

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Murray Theater is a fine example of moderately pretentious early 20th-Century public buildings. Design of the exterior shows the influence of both high-style Beaux-Arts and Chicago School buildings--indicative of the influence those two schools of thought had on American architects who had no fixed stylistic allegiance.

Exterior Description:

Massing of the theater is subdivided into two principle sections. The front is an articulated pavilion three major bays wide (bays determined by the pilasters on the second and third floors), three major bays deep, and three stories high. This front section delineates the lobbies, store fronts, office and apartment spaces. The rear section is devoted entirely to the auditorium and stage--the working part of the theater--and is basically an unarticulated brick mass with bays indicated by stiffening pilasters. The forward four bays, four stories high, enclose the auditorium; the final two bays project higher than the rest of the building and enclose the stage and flyloft.

The building is of brick bearing-wall construction with limited use of reinforced concrete. Steel I-beams are used to span the floors. All visible exterior surfaces are of yellow pressed brick. Original specifications called for light grey brick, to be set in a chocolate-colored mortar; weathering has made it impossible to determine the actual color of the original mortar. The first floor back through the third bay of the west side has been painted a dull green. The architrave, cornice, and parapet cap are of painted, galvanized metal; the window sills and belt course between the first and second floors are of Bedford Limestone.

The front elevation faces north onto East Main Street. The west elevation (right-hand side in the photos) faces South 10th Street. The south(back) and east elevations adjoin an alley and diner respectively.

The three-bay front elevation and northernmost three bays of the west elevation are similar. The first and third bays of the front are devoted to storefronts lit by large plate glass windows, and are now used as extensions of the lobby. The marquee-sheltered entrance is in the middle bay. Two sets of double doors open into the vestibule. Four piers having banded rustication carry the weight of the upper sections of the facade.

The second and third floors of the facade have three windows with one-over-one double-hung sash in ^{the} panels between panelled pilasters. The northern three bays of the west side have only two windows in each of the panels between pilasters.

A metal architrave, brick frieze, and wide cornice/box gutter of metal form the entablature. A parapet rises above this, having a slight pitch to the center and extra emphasis in the fancy metal protective caps at the corners.

The first floor of this section contains the shops, lobby, vestibule and restrooms. The second floor was originally devoted to offices, now used for

United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

Exterior Description - continued:

rehearsals and prop storage; the third floor originally had two five-room apartments, now costume storage.

The rear section is devoted exclusively to the auditorium and stage. The exterior of this part is six bays long, the bays being determined by stiffening pilasters in the brick wall. There are segmental-arched windows in the first, second, fourth and fifth bays of this section. An iron fire escape descends from the second-floor level in the second bay.

Interior Description:

The shops on either side of the lobby are similar. They are little more than large rooms, fitted out now for lounging during intermission. They have tile floors beneath the carpet, plastered walls, and fine pressed-tin ceilings.

The vestibule has a tile floor with "Indiana Theater" worked into the design. There is a coffered ceiling with molded plaster decoration, a fine marble box office, and marble wainscoting to approximately seven feet from the floor.

The lobby is similar, having the marble wainscoting and tile floor.

The auditorium is entered through three pairs of doors from the lobby. It was designed to generously accommodate 751, in box seats, the main floor, balcony, and gallery. At present there are no box seats--it is likely that they were removed when the theater was converted from vaudeville to movie bills. There are extensive Adamesque plaster moldings throughout, mostly original, some evidently added. The proscenium arch is "of the best concrete" and is decorated with Ionic columns and plasterwork. The asbestos firecurtain, not used from 1935 to 1965, when it was "rediscovered," is painted with a pastoral scene and features the initials "M.T." superimposed on one another near the lower edge.

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 1909

Builder/Architect Fred W. Elliott- Columbus, Ohio

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Omar G. Murray commissioned Fred W. Elliott of Columbus, Ohio, a noted theater architect, to design the Murray Theater. According to a contemporary newspaper account, it was to be "one of the most beautiful and pleasantly-equipped structures of its sort in the state."

Elliott evidently built his reputation on good, solid, pragmatic design rather than on brilliant innovation. The structure is carefully organized for efficient use of space, and every effort was made to incorporate the most modern features of theater design. These features included the extensive use of fireproof materials and paints, fresh air ventilation, steam heat, electric lights, a built-in vacuum-cleaning system, and roomy and comfortable seats (a contemporary judgement that many take exception to today). In addition, the building was equipped with a fireproof motion-picture projection booth and could handle both vaudeville and legitimate theater productions.

Assignment of a style to the Murray Theater poses some interesting problems. The design combines features associated with the Chicago School with others associated with the Beaux-Arts. The facade composition is clearly derived from Italian palazzo designs of the late Renaissance or Mannerist periods, in particular those of Andrea Palladio--the Palazzo Thiene, in Vicenza, for instance, in which a rusticated ground floor is surmounted by a main floor articulated by a colossal order. This was a common motif in Beaux-Arts building.

Elliott takes this Beaux-Arts composition and flattens it out, reworking the Classical detailing and making it reminiscent of the Chicago School.

The rusticated ground floor is reduced to four massive piers with great voids between them. The colossal order of the upper section is de-emphasized, being pilasters of the same brick as the rest of the building. They have no capitals, but their presence and importance in Elliott's mind is made explicit by breaking the entablature and projecting it several inches over each. In effect the capitals and entablature have been combined, joining the vertical and horizontal emphasis.

There are buildings where this is more skilfully handled: the vertical emphasis is not as pronounced as it might be, but the precedent of Chicago School building is nevertheless quite clear.

We tend to think of the Beaux-Arts and Chicago School as having represented two distinct schools of thought, and in many ways they did. But a building such as the Murray Theater provides us with some insight into the impact that the Chicago School had on American building practice through its interpretation by a lesser architect such as Fred W. Elliott. The Murray Theater also serves to point out some of the more conservative features of Chicago School design that tend to be passed over by architectural historians in their concern with that school's structural innovation.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8. PAGE 2.

Significance - continued

The interiors are quite restrained, and again the combination of Beaux-Arts and Chicago School influences is manifest. The vestibule's severely planar marble paneling and ticket booth--Chicago School influence--are juxtaposed with a coffered ceiling that is derived from the Beaux-Arts. In the auditorium, Adamesque stucco molding is applied directly to the structural shell. Only in the proscenium arch does a non-structural element articulate space. Colors were originally muted: the auditorium was in tones of green on an ivory background; the ladies' reception room was done in old rose and ivory. The overall impression is that more emphasis was laid on the creation of a practical, working theater than on the creation of an opulent, highly evocative environment.

The theater opened to great local excitement on October 11, 1909, playing two shows of four acts each for a full house. A local paper described it as having "shone like a gilded palace," and said that the show was "without exception, one hundred percent better than any vaudeville performance ever put on in this city before."

Though built with a projection booth for motion pictures, and able to handle legitimate theater, the Murray Theater was used primarily for vaudeville in its early days. Omar Murray and Gus Sun were partners, and together they ran the Murray-Sun circuit, which in 1909 consisted of approximately 17 houses in Ohio and Indiana. Mr. Murray's daughter, Mrs. J. R. Quigg of Richmond, recalls that 14 or 15 houses in Ohio were leased; all were called "The Orpheum." In addition, Gus Sun owned a theater, The Sun, in Springfield, Ohio.

Vaudeville played at the theater through 1931, and drew such acts as The Marx Brothers, The John Philip Sousa Band, Blackstone the Magician, Harry Frankel (the "Barbasol Man"), Fanny Brice and Annette Kellarman, who had a swimming act and appeared in a daring one-piece bathing suit.

In 1931 the name was changed to "The Indiana Theater," and the program became exclusively motion pictures. The theater served in this capacity until 1952, when it was taken over by Richmond Civic Theater, a local amateur company which produces plays and musicals. In recent years community use of the building has increased, and it is now also used by the Whitewater Valley Opera Company, also an amateur group, and Junior Players, the local children's theater organization.

The Murray Theater is the oldest theater in Richmond, and the only remaining example of the vaudeville houses that flourished there in the early years of this century. Its 70-year history of continuous use illustrates the importance the building has had in the city, first purely as an entertainment facility, and now as the center of Richmond's growing performing arts community.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8. PAGE 3.

Significance - continued

The theater building figures prominently in the streetscape of East Main. Because of extensive demolition in the area immediately surrounding the downtown business district, the Murray Theater is the only bridge between that section of town and the remaining commercial neighborhood further east. It acts as an anchor for the east end of the downtown pedestrian mall, and in spite of the loss of its neighbor across the street, the Westcott Hotel, it could serve as a focal point for regeneration of the 1000 and 1100 blocks of East Main.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Richmond Palladium and Sun-Telegram Conversation with Mrs. J.R. Quigg, Oct. 11, 1979
Jan. 14, 1909 Aug. 8, 1909
Jan. 16, 1909 Oct. 12, 1909
July 30, 1909 Uncatalogued clipping collection in possession
of Mrs J.R. Quigg, Greenmount Pike, Richmond.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre
Quadrangle name Richmond Quad Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	1 6	6 8 0	6 8 0	4 4 1 0	6 8 0	B					
	Zone	Easting		Northing			Zone	Easting		Northing	
C						D					
E						F					
G						H					

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot number 5 and 4.5 feet off the west side of lot number 6 in Bickle and Law's addition to the plat of the City of Richmond.

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

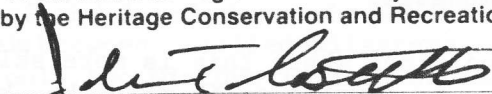
name/title Patrick Steele
Eastern Regional Office, Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana
Eastern Regional Office, Historic
organization Landmarks Foundation of Indiana date Nov. 1, 1979
street & number R.R. #1, Box 555 telephone (317) 478-3172
city or town Cambridge City state Indiana 47327

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

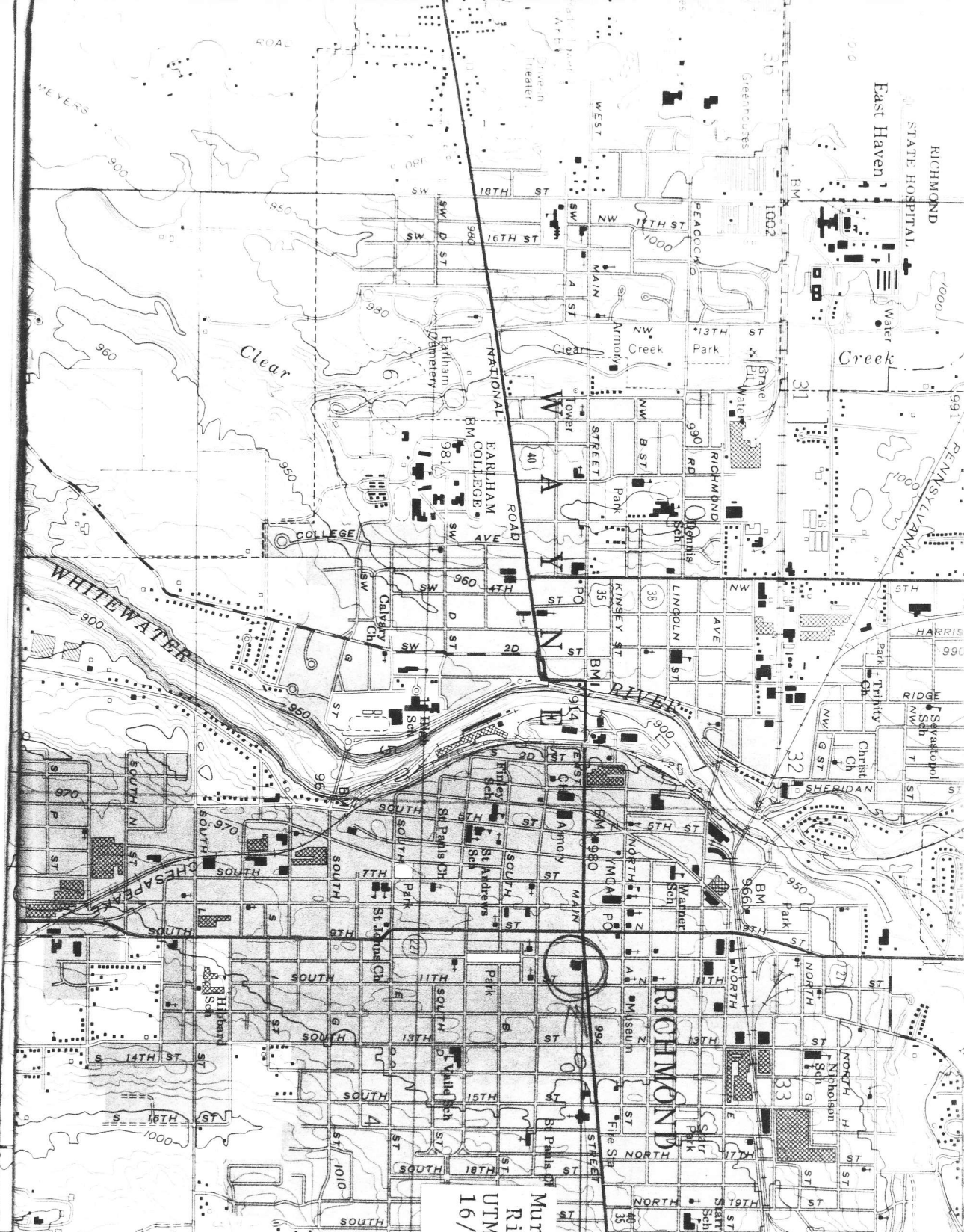
national state local

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer date 2-12-82

For HCRS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
date
Keeper of the National Register
Attest: _____ date
Chief of Registration



Murray Theater
 Richmond, Indiana
 UTM Reference:
 16/680680/4410680

(NEW PARIS)

NEW PARIS, OHIO 4.7 MI
 3.1 MI. TO INTERSTATE 70
 EATON, OHIO 14 MI.
 T. 13 N.
 T. 14 N.