United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  

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 WARNER THEATER

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 811 State Street  
not for publication

city, town Erie  
vicinity of congressional district 24th

state Pennsylvania  
code 42  
county Erie  
code 049

3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Present Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>district</td>
<td>X public</td>
<td>X occupied</td>
<td>museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>building(s)</td>
<td>___ private</td>
<td>___ unoccupied</td>
<td>commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structure</td>
<td>___ both</td>
<td>___ work in progress</td>
<td>educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site</td>
<td>Public Acquisition</td>
<td>X yes: restricted</td>
<td>entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object</td>
<td>___ in process</td>
<td>___ yes: unrestricted</td>
<td>government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___ being considered</td>
<td>___ no</td>
<td>industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>military</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Owner of Property

name Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Dept. of General Services)

street & number Bureau of Real Estate, Room 503, North Office Building

city, town Harrisburg  
vicinity of  
state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Erie County Courthouse

street & number 140 West 6th Street

city, town Erie  
state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places  
has this property been determined eligible?  ___ yes ___ no

date 4-1-31  
___ federal  X state  ___ county  ___ local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg  
state Pennsylvania
Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Warner Theatre, completed in 1930, is a 2,500 seat motion picture theatre built with an opulence then characteristic of the Warner Brothers Company. It was designed by Rapp and Rapp at a cost of $1,500,000, including an acre of pure gold and silver leaf. It is a provincial masterpiece of its genre.

Architecturally, the Warner might be classified as French-Renaissance in style, yet incorporating the Art Deco influences of its period. The theatre facade is articulated in brick and ornamental terra cotta spandrel panels, with a vertical "Warner" sign and a marquee extending over the ticket booth. Both the free-standing booth and the five entry doors are solid bronze with glass inserts.

Off of the ticket lobby are reserved seat booths and administrative offices. The ticket lobby leads to the grand lobby, 130 ft. long with a 33 ft. ceiling. This lobby is decorated with ornate gold and silver leaf swirls and filigree. A solid cast bronze and leaded glass chandelier of art deco design hangs from the ceiling. (All of the lighting fixtures in the theatre were bronze and leaded glass, designed by the architects.) The lobby has a terrazzo floor, mammoth arches, vaults, and columns, gold-backed mirrors, and a grand staircase with ornamental brass railings which leads to balcony seating for 730 and the projection room.

The grand lobby leads into the orchestre foyer, the walls of which feature two Batchelder Founts, stylized plaster figures in shadow boxes, and wall mosaics. This foyer is furnished with "rococo" pieces and gilt-framed paintings. Elaborate Gentlemen and Ladies' suites are accessible from it.

The 1,780 seat auditorium (orchestra - 122'x143') itself displays an Egyptian motif with art deco swirls. From the gold-leaf ceiling hang two chandeliers, and a light clove in the domed portion encircles a plaster grille. Four smaller light fixtures hang from side walls by cast bronze sconces. The luxurious wall coverings are framed by gold-leaf trim. Illuminated bronze markers indicate exits. An elaborately framed proscenium opens to the orchestra pit and stage. Backstage there are rooms for dressing, rehearsal and storage.
### 8. Significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>^ prehistoric</td>
<td>___ archeology-prehistoric ___ community planning ___ landscape architecture ___ religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400-1499</td>
<td>___ archeology-historic ___ conservation ___ law</td>
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<tr>
<td>1500-1599</td>
<td>___ agriculture ___ economics ___ literature</td>
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<td>1600-1699</td>
<td>___ ___ education ___ military</td>
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<td>1700-1799</td>
<td>___ art ___ engineering ___ music</td>
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<td>1800-1899</td>
<td>___ commerce ___ exploration/settlement ___ philosophy ___ humanitarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>X 1900–</td>
<td>___ communications ___ industry ___ politics/government</td>
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<tr>
<td>___ invention ___ transportation ___ other (specify)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific dates</th>
<th>Builder/Architect</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>C.W. &amp; George Rapp, Architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George A. Fuller Co., Builder</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Warner Theatre is one of the most outstanding buildings in Erie. Built by the Pa. Theatre Company, a subsidiary of Warner Brothers, it was designed by Rapp and Rapp, a pre-eminent firm in the area of movie palace design.

In its heyday, the Warner served as an entertainment center, featuring both live performances and films. It also served as district headquarters in the Warner Brothers theatrical empire. It was and remains the largest theatre of its kind in northwestern Pennsylvania and the only building in the elaborate French-Renaissance/Art Deco styling in the region.

C. W. and George Rapp headed the Chicago firm that designed the Warner. They are acknowledged to be among the top three architects of American movie palaces, the others being John Eberson and Thomas W. Lamb. They began their theatre design career in 1915 with the Central Park in Chicago, and later the Chicago Oriental. Their other masterpieces, c. 1921-1931 include the Ambassador in St. Louis, the Paramount in New York, the Shea in Buffalo, and the Warner in Erie.
9. Major Bibliographical References

Life Magazine, Feb. 1972; Stylized figure was featured.

Marquee Magazine, Warner Theater was cited as a premier example of a Provincial Motion Picture Palace.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: 0.75
Quadrangle name: Erie North

UMT References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Easting</th>
<th>Northing</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>A</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13 7 3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jay M. Armbruster & John Evans
organization: Erie Civic Center Authority
Heidt, Evans & Salata, Architects
date: 11/6/80

street & number: 811 State Street
telephone: 814-452-4857

city or town: Erie
state: Pennsylvania
zip code: 16512

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

Larry E. Tise, Executive Director

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission
date: 2/20/82

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

date

Chief of Registration

date