

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Jefferson Theater

and or common

2. Location

street & number 230 North Findley Street n/a not for publication

city, town Punxsutawney n/a vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code county Jefferson code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" 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: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name J. B. Blose

street & number 509 West Mahoning Avenue

city, town Punxsutawney n/a vicinity of state PA 15767

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jefferson County Court House

street & number Main Street

city, town Brookville state PA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title none has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

938-797

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved

date

MA

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Jefferson Theatre is located in the heart of the central business district of the borough of Punxsutawney. Its plan consists of two principal masses: a one-story lobby, 12 feet in width, which leads from Findley Street eastward 70 feet to the entrance to the auditorium; and the auditorium itself, which measures ca. 70'x107'. The rather modest exterior of the entry facade features a veneer of Hummelstown brownstone over common brick. The principal design element of the brownstone facade is a centered recessed entry (presently boarded up) with a freestanding ticket booth. A marquee, a later addition, is hung over the entrance. The original entry configuration was defined by "an arch constructed of Hummelstown stone and folding iron gates surmounted by an arch of crystal glass. Inscribed in the glass is the name of the theater, the words and entire arch being handsomely set off by electric lights in the background." (PUNXSUTAWNEY SPIRIT, 11/22/05) The arch is barely visible behind the marquee.

One inside the building from the main entrance, the narrow lobby rises gently along its 70-foot length. Although somewhat altered, the lobby does retain integrity of plan as well as some original features including a series of gilt mirrors in a Palladian motif, characteristic of the period of the Colonial Revival during which the theater was constructed.

Making a right-angle turn at the end of the lobby, one enters the foyer of the auditorium. The hall seats over 1,200 and features a main floor as well as a rather spacious balcony. The balcony is supported by a series of cast iron columns with composite capitals. At several places, including the soffits of the balcony and the boxes, there are rose-colored draped hangings, which correspond exactly with the opening-night description of the theater which appeared in the local newspaper. By and large, the auditorium is in a poor state of repair, with peeling plaster and deterioration caused by disuse. By the same token, however, the plan and major features of the auditorium are intact and original. The proscenium arch measures 36'x25', and is encircled with ornamental plaster in relief. The stage itself is 38'x68', with 47' between the flies and 53' to the top of the gridiron. The drop curtain may well be original, although if this is the case it has been repainted since the original bust portrait of Joseph Jefferson (in whose honor the theater was named) is no longer visible. Immediately in front of the stage is an orchestra pit, and beneath the stage and seating area is a basement with storage areas and former dressing rooms.

As noted earlier, the Jefferson Theater is located in the heart of the central business district. Punxsutawney's downtown does possess a number of structures of local historical import, but no survey has been done to identify other historic or architectural resources within the community. To the north of the building is an area of railroad tracks, while on its other sides it is surrounded by commercial construction.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1905

Builder/Architect H.C. Parks, arch't; McKean Harl, builder

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Jefferson Theater is significant for its long association with the local entertainment scene in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, and also for its reasonably well preserved theater interior. The Jefferson is important as the community's only remaining theater, but more important than its role as a survivor is the building's stature as a remarkable local architectural resource in its own right. Its active history spanned seven decades, encompassing the era of travelling theatrical troupes, vaudeville, silent movies, the "talkies," and contemporary cinema. Although its exterior is relatively modest, the interior reflects the artistic decorative skills and fashion which were in force and available in rural northwestern Pennsylvania around the turn of the century.

Punxsutawney had other performing halls during this period, but the Jefferson met a specific need which was keenly felt by the community at the time. The early years of the twentieth century saw tremendous growth in this town. The population doubled from 1900 to 1905, and during the same year that the Jefferson was built, more than one hundred other new buildings were built in Punxsutawney. (PUNXSUTAWNEY SPIRIT, 7/26/05, 9/27/05)

Addressing the need for a modern hall, the local newspaper offered not-too-subtle hints in its March 22, 1905 edition: "The theatrical season is practically ended and before the advent of another, Punxsutawney should have an opera house commensurate with the size and importance of the community. This is a splendid show town and all that is needed to attract large audiences are good companies and a place to show them." The gauntlet was picked up by one of the town's leading citizens, Daniel H. Clark, who in April of 1905 purchased property on Findley Street where buildings had been leveled by a fire eighteen months before. Clark was a lumberman of major proportions and had also been instrumental in the development of a streetcar system connecting Punxsutawney to nearby communities. As the Jefferson Theater neared completion, he was described as "the greatest builder who has yet appeared in this town." (PUNXSUTAWNEY SPIRIT, 10/11/05)

Clark formed a stock company, the Punxsutawney Opera House Co., and by June of 1905 the foundation for the new building was completed. The theater was designed by H.C. Parks of Ridgway, Pennsylvania, a designer who was active in residential, commercial, and public design in this region during the early twentieth century. The stock company chose as

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Continuation sheet Jefferson Theater Item number 8 Page 2

their contractor one of Punxsutawney's leading master builders, McKean Harl, who had just completed the construction of Punxsutawney's Cumberland Presbyterian Church as well as the Methodist Church in near-by Reynoldsville. (PUNXSUTAWNEY SPIRIT, 12/14/04) Together, Harl and Parks collaborated to erect "one of the largest and prettiest theaters in the state . . . second to none in this section of the country for beauty and convenience." (PUNXSUTAWNEY SPIRIT, 5/3/05, 11/15/05).

The 1,265-seat theater opened to rave reviews in November, 1905, with a performance by the Princess Chic Opera Co. The finished product reflected the combined talents of local contractors as well as those of out-of-town professionals. According to a lengthy narrative which appeared in the local newspaper on November 22, 1905, the theater's state-of-the-art electrical system was the product of the Iron City Engineering Co. of Pittsburgh, and was executed from the designs of that firm's W.J. Bickford, who was also responsible for the design of the lighting system of Pittsburgh's magnificent Nixon Theater. The asbestos drop curtain was the product of W.F. Wise of Tyrone, PA., and the scenic decoration was by the William Eckert Co. of Chicago.

The theater was operated by the Punxsutawney Opera House Co. until 1911, when the company apparently ran into financial difficulty. It was sold at sheriff's sale to H.G. Bowers, James B. Phelan, and D.H. Clark, all of whom were members of the original stock company. Shortly thereafter the Jefferson Theater Co. (with Bowers and Phelan as president and secretary, respectively) purchased the theater and operated it until 1915 when Joseph Weist took over. In 1925 the James B. Clark Theater Co. of Pittsburgh assumed control, only to be succeeded the following year by the Stanley Company of America, also of Pittsburgh.

The latter operated the theater until 1966. It closed in the 1970's.

Jefferson Theatre by do.

9. Major Bibliographical Reference

Punxsutawney Spirit, 12/14/1904; 1905: 3/22, 7/26, 9/20, 9/27, 5/3, 11/22.
Jefferson County Deed Book No. 131, Page 138 (1911), filed at Jefferson County Court House
McKnight, W.J. Jefferson County, Pennsylvania, Her Pioneers & People (Chicago; 1917), pp. 24-26,
428, 452-453.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre
Quadrangle name Punxsutawney, Pa. Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	<u>17</u>	<u>670470</u>	<u>4534320</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point on the E side of N. Findley St. (said point being ca. 475' N of the intersection of Findley & Mahoning Sts.); then N 14' to a point; then E 150' to a point on the W curb line of Pine Alley; then S along Pine Alley 120' to a point; then W 70' to a point; then N 100' to a point; then W 80' to the place of beginning.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David L. Taylor

organization _____ date 11 January, 1985

street & number 296 Jefferson Street telephone 814-849-3467

city or town Brookville state PA 15825

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]

title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer date 3/19/85

For NPS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register _____ date _____

Attest: _____ date _____
Chief of Registration

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A

1	7	6	7	0	4	7	0	4	5	3	4	3	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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state N/A code county code

state code county code

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Historic Preservation Officer

date

3/19/85

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date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

JEFFERSON THEATER
Punxsutawney, Jefferson Co., PA
UTM Reference:
17/670470/4534320

