



# THE FLORIDA THEATER

## DESIGNATION REPORT

233 West University Avenue



Prepared by:  
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Historic Preservation Officer  
City of Gainesville  
September 2024

*“A properly conducted theatre is of the same importance to a community as a school or a church. Such a theatre contributes to the community’s welfare because wholesome recreation is essential to its well-being.”*

- Sam Katz, President of Publix Theaters of Paramount Pictures, 1926

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Florida Theater is an icon of Gainesville's downtown commercial corridor on University Avenue, having entertained generations of residents, students and visitors since 1928. One of the most beloved and memorable local venues, the Florida Theater has served during various stages of its life as a movie theater, concert stage, dance club, music hall, and lounge.

Like the downtown itself, the Florida Theater has seen both very prosperous days and periods of neglect. Several owners throughout the years have contributed to the building's longevity, with different rehabilitations repurposing the building for a variety of uses, but always with the overarching theme of being a great gathering place for the community.

The current owner, Mr. Bill Bryson, purchased the building in 2017. Mr. Bryson, who has extensive experience in venue operations and concert promoting, saw an opportunity to try and revive the Florida Theater, bringing back its musical history and making it come alive after several years of closure. Once the last tenant, a dance club, was removed, the building was thoroughly gutted and cleaned out in 2018. The outbreak of the pandemic would put a pause on the effort to provide any meaningful restoration or buildouts.

In the summer of 2024, Mr. Bryson once again ramped up efforts to finally try and create a restoration and programming plan for this important landmark. In coordination with City of Gainesville and Alachua County officials, Mr. Bryson has assembled a dynamic working team of community members dedicated to this cause that include local architects, contractors, fundraising and marketing experts, downtown business owners, and financing professionals, with the goal of bringing back the Theater for all of Gainesville to enjoy once again.

It is Mr. Bryson's hope that the historical designation of the Florida Theater will not only provide it with the protection that it so richly deserves, but will also help with structuring a financially sound renovation package through the use of various historic preservation grants, tax credits and other incentives.

The Florida Theater opened on September 10, 1928. September of 2028 will mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and it is the hope of the owner and community supporters alike that in that moment, the Theater's marquee will once again be lit up and surrounded by excited patrons, becoming a catalyst for the continued improvement of downtown Gainesville.



## II. GENERAL INFORMATION

**NAME:** The Florida Theater

**ADDRESS:** 233 West University Avenue  
Gainesville, FL 32601  
(Former address is 212 West University Avenue)

**PARCEL ID:** 12948-000-000

**PROPERTY OWNER:** Florida Theater Gainesville LLC (Bill Bryson)  
PO Box 13891  
Gainesville, FL 32604

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** COM 120 FT E OF SE COR OF UNIVERSITY AVE & SW 3RD ST RUN S 166.8 FT E 60 FT N 67.8 FT E 20 FT N 99 FT W 80 FT TO POB OR 1589/255 ALSO 9 FT STRIP S OF ABOVE DESC & STRIP ADJ TO SELY 67.8 FT & PART OF ALLEY TO SW 2ND ST AKA PARCEL 4 MSD BK 2 PG 50 DEED APPE

**YEAR BUILT:** 1928

**ZONING:** DT (Downtown)  
Maximum stories by right: 12 stories (14 with bonuses)

**COMMISSION DISTRICT:** District 1

**OTHER LAND USE DESIGNATIONS:** Enterprise Zone, UF Context Area

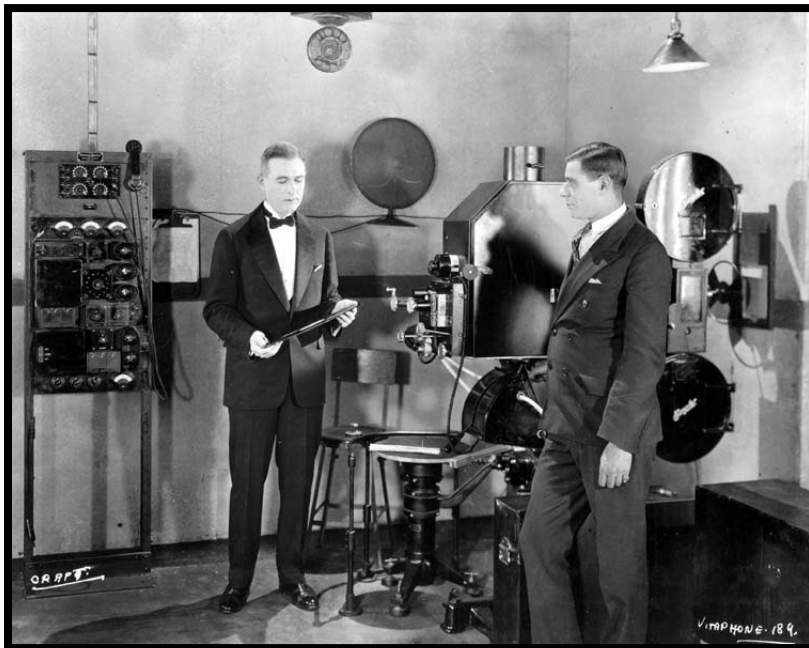
### III. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

It was a popular time for movie theaters. The building boom in Florida was at its peak frenzy, the Golden Age of Hollywood in its infant stages. The Tampa Theatre was envisioned as an elaborate movie palace, featuring a “night sky with twinkling stars” and décor that imitated a romantic Mediterranean courtyard. When it opened in 1926, it offered one of the most elaborate theater interior’s ever to be built in Florida.

Similarly, no expense was spared on the Florida Theatre in Jacksonville. It was designed in the high style of Mediterranean Revival, and when it opened in 1927, it was the largest theater in the state of Florida.

The two-story brick building that would become a household name in Gainesville was modest by comparison, and yet the community embraced its grand opening with just as much fanfare and revelry. The new Florida Theatre was built at a cost of \$150,000 and was said to “rank with the finest in the entire South,” according to a Sunday paper ad that ran the day before the Theatre’s opening (Crossley, p. 1).

The theatre was proud to offer the latest equipment of the time, including Vitaphone, which was a type of sound system used on feature films and shorts by Warner Brother Studios in the late 1920s. The Sunday ad enticed moviegoers with the new technology, proclaiming “Vitaphone, the invention that is thrilling the world, is to be one of the amusement features of the Florida [Theatre]. A Vitaphone program is to be offered every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of each week.”



A Vitaphone projection system in 1926.

*Source:* Warner Brothers Motion Picture, Vitaphone History, Wikipedia

The Florida Theatre offered its opening film lineup with a published announcement that stated:

*“WELCOME University Students, University of Florida Faculty and the Good People of Gainesville and Alachua County to the Grand Opening of the Florida Theatre, home of the wonderful Vitaphone”*  
(Matheson Museum archives).

The Florida Theatre opened on September 10, 1928. The first feature length film to be shown was “4 Walls,” starring John Gilbert and Joan Crawford. An adult matinee ticket was 50 cents, while an evening ticket was 75 cents.

The new theater’s interiors as described by patron Sophie Burkham painted an interesting and vivid picture; “The interior and lobby of the new Florida theatre present one of the most elaborate and authentic decorative interpretations expressed in any theatre of the Southland. Following the Spanish-Colonial trend, the brilliant coloring of Old Spain, tempered by the more sedate and subdued Colonists period, is united into a harmony that seems to wrap itself into a cloak to fit any wearer, so perfectly is it adapted to the general setting” (Crossley, p. 2).

Unfortunately, the Florida Theatre wasn’t open to “all,” as theaters were segregated and the Florida Theatre was designated for “Whites Only.” The Lincoln Theater was the only Black theater at the time, which was upstairs from a cab stand located on West Seminary Lane. The Lincoln Theater morphed into the Rose Theater, after moving east of 6<sup>th</sup> Street (Flanery and Zentz, 2003). White city leaders would refuse to participate in the negotiations and integration of the Florida Theater and other Gainesville establishments until the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Donavon, 2018).

Theater goers were invited to a wide variety of fun evenings, with a variety of publicity stunts planned to lure patrons. Bank nights (similar to casino nights), beauty pageants and other themed events worked; the theater often sold out its 800-seat capacity. As World War II came to an end, hard times began to plague the Florida Theater. Newer motion picture houses shifted the focus from downtown to the suburbs, for both business and entertainment (Rathbun, 1985, para. 11).

#### THE GREAT SOUTHERN MUSIC HALL

The next major “era” of the Florida Theatre came about in 1974, when three friends caught an entrepreneurial bug. Jeffrey Meldon, a young local attorney and his then law partner Peter Laird teamed up with local businessman Jim Forsman to begin transforming the shuttered theater into what would become The Great Southern Music Hall. All three men loved a good concert and were dedicated to expanding the local live music scene. They wanted to put Gainesville on the musical culture map.

It was their plan to put a quarter of a million dollars into the facility, which still had an 800-seat capacity and excellent acoustics (Cahlin, p. 1). The structure had that eerie feeling abandoned buildings often get, like they are stuck in time. The projection room, full of antiquated machinery, still had an ashtray full of cigarette butts and a Humphrey Bogart photo tacked to the wall. The dressing rooms behind the stage had old prop drops, remnants from the Theater's early vaudeville days. The rest of the theatre was littered with old movie posters, broken glass and a destroyed telephone (Cahlin, p.1) But the men all had the same vision, and they knew it was going to be a success.



From left: Jeffrey Meldon, Peter Laird, and Jim Forsman

Source: Matheson History Museum Archives

Their renovations included the installation of a new bar upstairs where small offices used to be located. Upon receiving a liquor license, the business took off. The UF campus was dry at the time, and this was one of the few places where the students could buy drinks.

One of the best business tips they would receive came from an unlikely source; Ray Charles. He told the men to keep the A/C turned up high and the popcorn salty, so that the customers would buy more beer (Matheson History Museum, YouTube video). Ray Charles was one of the very first performers to grace the stage of the Great Southern Music Hall, with back-to-back shows on a Tuesday and Wednesday, May 28-29, 1974 (McGee, 1974).

With its plush (for the time) theater seats, chilly AC, and state-of-the-art sound and light systems, the Great Southern Music Hall revolutionized, and civilized, the concert experience in Gainesville (DeYoung, 2022, para. 2).

The Great Southern Music Hall took off like a flash. During its short tenure, an endless number of entertainers, bands, and musicians would perform on this stage. Albert Teabagy joined the team to take over talent-booking, and the list of artists reads like a 'Who's Who' in musical history:



Waylon Jennings, Randy Newman, Jimmy Buffett, Dan Fogelberg, BB King, Bo Diddley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Ray Charles, Rush (in their first American tour), Muddy Waters, Patti LaBelle, Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, the Count Basie Orchestra, Chuck Mangione, Jimmy Cliff, Molly Hatchett, Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band, Greg Allman, Kraftwerk, Melissa Manchester, Ike and Tina Turner, Dave Brubeck, Ramsey Lewis, Steppenwolf, and many more.

The popularity of the Great Southern Music Hall became so significant, it was featured in Billboard Magazine in 1979. Comic acts were also part of the regular rotation, and entertainers such as Cheech and Chong and Steve Martin performed to sellout crowds. When “Last Call” was called, Martin wasn’t quite finished with his show, so he had the audience follow him out onto University Avenue, where he proceeded to stand on the base of a lamppost and finish his routine (DeYoung, 2022, para 20).



Steve Martin performed a couple of different times at the Great Southern Music Hall in the late 1970s. His act would sometimes go on for over 75 minutes.

*Photo Credit: 24.media.tumblr.com*

In addition to the live shows, the theater still maintained a motion picture capacity. The managing partners recently had the chance to reminisce during a panel discussion held at the Matheson History Museum to celebrate the business’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022. They told the story about how in 1978 the Great Southern Music Hall was the only place in Florida where you could find a showing of the Bob Dylan movie “Reinaldo and Clara,” which was best described by one of the panelists as a “truly truly terrible movie,” clocking in at almost 5 hours in length (Matheson History Museum YouTube video).

By the early 1980s, the young attorneys were focusing more on their law careers and were a bit burnt out by the intense schedules and effort it takes to run a music venue and nightclub. In less than a decade, the Great Southern Music Hall would close its doors forever, again leaving the revered building in limbo.



An exhibit on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Southern Music Hall, featuring the photography of John Moran, at the Matheson History Museum, 2022

*Photo Credit: Gainesville Sun*

### A Return to “The Florida Theater”

In the mid-1980s, rumors swirled that the City of Gainesville and the University of Florida were going to join forces to rehabilitate the Great Southern Music Hall into a proper performing arts center. Representative Jon Mills agreed that this kind of facility was needed in Gainesville to “fill a cultural void” (Shonbrun, p. 8A). A task force was created in 1984 spearheaded by Mills, along with the Gainesville Downtown Redevelopment Agency to determine the feasibility of such an endeavor.

Shortly after it was determined that renovation costs would be close to \$5 million dollars, University of Florida President Robert Marston wrote that the cost “was too much for UF and the city to bear,” and the plan fizzled out (Braunstein, p. B1)

Enter Ken and Linda McGurn, local power-couple that were downtown property owners and philanthropists. They decided to rehabilitate the building with their own money. Instead of the previous plan to enlarge the seating to 1500, they would keep it at 800 seats but would infuse the building with many new upgrades and amenities.

Ken McGurn was president of the board of directors for the Gainesville Chamber Orchestra at the time, so he was very keen on the idea of a proper cultural facility. The hope was to attract similarly large dance, theatrical, and symphonic groups that previously would overlook Gainesville for lack of a proper performance space. The McGurns would eventually spend more than \$500,000 in renovations, including a handmade oak bar, reupholstered seats, dressing rooms and a sprinkler system (Kirby, 1989, para. 3).



Ken and Linda McGurn are local philanthropists who have helped in the redevelopment of much of downtown Gainesville in the last several decades.

*Photo Credit: Gainesville Sun*

The 760-seat theater also included two new lounge areas to provide space for performance groups such as the Gainesville Chamber Orchestra and Dance Alive, but the building ended up being rarely utilized. The McGurns put the property on the market in 1989.

#### A Future for the Florida Theater?

Around 1990, all of the upholstered seats were taken out of the theater to create a large dancefloor. The beloved facility became a revolving door for various dance club parties and events. By 2015, the building had slowly deteriorated from over two decades of college student parties, rave events, and various bar operations.

Bill Bryson was the owner and operator of locally famous music venue The Covered Dish from 1992-2000. He also was the producer of “Cypress Sessions,” a program that showcased Florida musicians through live performance footage. He purchased the shuttered Florida Theater in 2017 after the last dance club closed. Bryson completely gutted the interior in 2018 and cleaned up the leftover construction debris. With his extensive background in music and concert promotions and facility management, it is his hope to once again let The Florida Theater serve as a well-loved community facility that becomes a catalyst for a larger downtown renaissance.



Bill Bryson has been called Gainesville’s “musical godfather,” having played an integral role in shaping downtown Gainesville’s culture of music and art.

*Photo Credit: Gainesville Sun*

#### IV. CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

The City of Gainesville's Historic Preservation Ordinance is modeled after federal criteria for evaluation found in the *Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, Part 60*, and as set forth in City of Gainesville Land Development Code *Section 30-4.28 (C)(3), Review Criteria*.

All potential designation resources are evaluated to determine if the quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in the districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Florida Theater is significant under the following criteria, as set forth in Section 30-4.28 (C)(3):

**Criterion (a):** Is associated with events or persons that are significant to our local, state, or national history; and

**Criterion (b):** Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

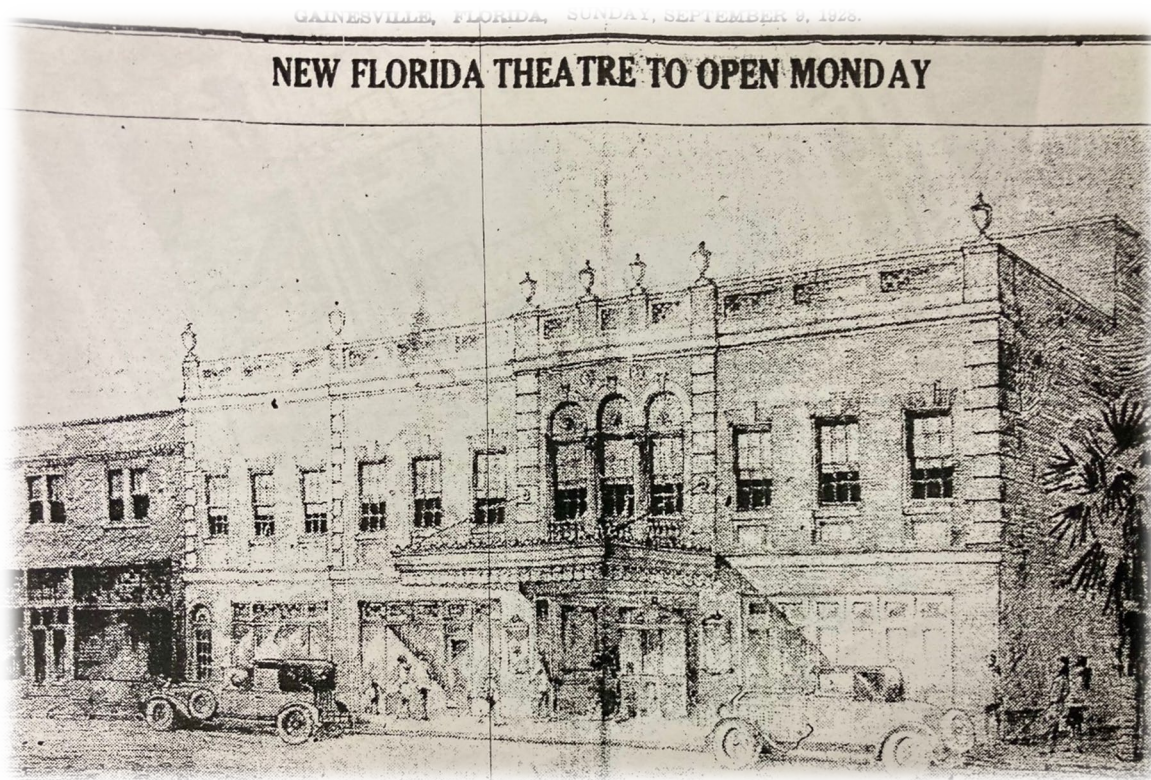
Throughout its lifetime, the Florida Theater hosted hundreds of thousands of theater and concert patrons, playing an integral part in the early development of Gainesville's core downtown. The venue opened with great fanfare in 1928 where it showed one of the first talking pictures, "The Four Walls," starring John Gilbert and Joan Crawford. For many decades, it served as a music and concert venue, hosting some of the county's most famous musicians and band performances, including Tom Petty, Jerry Lee Lewis, Bo Diddley, Ray Charles, Melissa Manchester, Dave Brubeck, BB King, Elvis Bishop, Jimmy Buffet, and many more. The Florida Theater fulfills Criterion (a): *associated with events or persons that are significant to our local, state, or national history*.

The two-story brick building has a simplified Neoclassical façade with Adamesque Revival details including turned balusters, sunburst panels above the central windows, and stone and brick quoining. Some alterations have occurred on the primary façade over the years, including a change to the marquee and the enclosure of the ground floor picture window storefronts. The marquee had already been altered by the 1940s and therefore this version maintains historic significance in its own right. Other original architectural features on the primary façade remain intact. The building fulfills Criterion (b): *embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction*.



## V. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Florida Theater has an oblong footprint and is now part of a continuous row of commercial buildings along West University Avenue. According to a 1928 Sanborn map (continuously updated through 1950,) the building is made of brick for the exterior facades (with possibly hollow clay tile within). The brick has an unusually rough, undulated texture. There is a stepped-flat roof, with the height increasing towards the rear of the building where the movie screen was located.



An original rendering of the Florida Theater (then spelled Theatre) published in the Gainesville Sun the day before it opened on September 10, 1928.

*Courtesy of the Matheson Historical Museum Archives*

The original façade featured a central entryway with projecting canopy supported by cables. The central entryway was further defined on the second floor by a tripartite set of 6/6 double-hung sash windows topped by arched sunburst insets. These three sets of windows were separated by engaged pilasters, and the arched insets were outlined with bricks and central keystones. Vertical columns of stone quoins framed the tripartite windows, from the canopy to the rooftop, to further provide definition of the central bay.

The ground floor appeared to have a series of floor to ceiling glass storefronts that were 6 windows with transom sets adjoined together. The building also featured brick quoins at the corners, and decorative urns that topped the parapet.



The Florida Theatre in the early 1930s.  
*Courtesy of the Matheson Historical Museum  
 Archives*

The front façade was not symmetrical. An additional bay extended to the east, adding three more windows to the second floor and one more storefront on the ground floor. On this extension, the windows had simple brick lintels in contrast to the other window lintels of the second floor which included keystones.

The theater began to experience changes almost immediately. Additional signage walls were added to the sides of the original marquee. The bottom of the vertical blade sign can be seen just above the arched sunbursts in a photo dates from the 1930s. The windows also appear to have been changed for 1/1 double hung sashes.

Another major alteration to the building occurred near the end of the 1930s, which expanded the marquee outward beneath the three window bays to each side of the central entryway. Channel letters spelled out the word FLORIDA in the center of the marquee. The storefronts were changed to large, single pane windows with recessed doorways.

Today, the ground floor of the theater has lost much of the original integrity. Most of the storefronts have been filled in with brick, and a menagerie of glass doors and windows comprise the enlarged recessed entrance.

The interior has been gutted and no original material remains inside the theater space.





The Florida Theatre at the time it was showing the 1939 film,  
*"The Great Victor Herbert"*  
 Courtesy of the Florida Theater Facebook Page



The Florida Theater at night, 1940s. Photo by Earl Jernigan  
 Courtesy of the Florida Theater Facebook Page



## VI. EXISTING CONDITIONS

All photos are from the Office of Historic Preservation, City of Gainesville, unless otherwise noted.



*Photo Credit: Google Street View, June 2024*



*Photo Credit: Jack Coursey, Cinema Treasures*





Most of the original architectural features above the ground floor remain, including engaged pilasters with Corinthian capitals, arched terra cotta sunbursts above the central windows, decorative urns on the parapet, and decorative terra cotta medallions above the arches.



Brick quoins delineate the bays by providing a vertical separation. Vegetative growth on the masonry is typical for buildings that have lacked proper maintenance over the years.

Notice the rough-faced brick on the first floor, which was probably a later change in material, since the ground floor originally had glass storefronts that were enclosed.





Condition of the ground floor brick facing exhibiting pollutant issues/water damage from leaking drainpipes.



Deterioration of soffits and beams within the recessed entryway.





View underneath the marquee looking east along University Avenue.



*Photo Credit:* Interior shots by John Moran





*Photo Credit:* Interior shots by John Moran

## VII. EFFECTS OF DESIGNATION

The effects of historic designation of the Florida Theater will require that changes or alterations to the exterior, additions, demolition, or related new construction be approved by the City of Gainesville's Office of Historic Preservation. These requests are done through the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process.

Most COA approvals are handled in-house by Staff of the Office of Historic Preservation. Only extensive alterations, demolition, or related new construction will require review by the Historic Preservation Board.

### ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

Designated resources are eligible for various tax credits, incentives, and any historic preservation grants that may be available at the time:

**Federal Tax Credits:** The Federal Historic Preservation Tax incentive program encourages private sector investment in the rehabilitation and re-use of historic buildings. It is one of the nation's most successful and cost-effective community revitalization programs, administered by the National Park Service in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

The Historic Tax Credit is a federal income tax credit equal to 20% of the allowable expenses incurred in a certified rehabilitation of a certified historic structure, which must be an income-producing property after the project is completed.

**Local Ad Valorem Tax Incentives:** Both the City of Gainesville and Alachua County offer the historic preservation ad-valorem tax incentive, which essentially freezes the value of a property for taxing purposes, to what it was valued at prior to the rehabilitation work. Owners still pay property taxes, but for a period of ten years, owners will be exempt from having their property values raised due to the improvements made to the property.

**State Historic Preservation Grants:** Non-profit organizations and government agencies that own historic buildings are eligible to apply for preservation grants from the Florida Division of Historical Resources. Grants may be *small matching* (\$50,000 or under) for planning and survey projects, or *special category grants* (up to \$1,000,000, with a 50% match) for brick and mortar projects. Grant applications are ranked every September and are awarded the following June, once the State Legislature has appropriated funding.

### STREAMLINED PROCESSES

Properties that are individually designated or within a historic district can take advantage of the Historic Preservation Board's ability to modify existing zoning requirements (per Section 30-4.28(D)(1)). This includes variances to setbacks, building height, building separation, floor area ratios, and maximum lot coverage if the requested variance helps facilitate appropriate new

construction, rehabilitation, or the relocation of historic buildings or structures. The process by which the Historic Preservation Board can grant such variances is less complicated than obtaining variances through the normal channels, making historic designation more appealing.



#### VIII. STAFF EVALUATION/RECOMMENDATION

Staff has performed site visits to the Florida Theater and has completed research related to its history, cultural context, integrity and architecture.

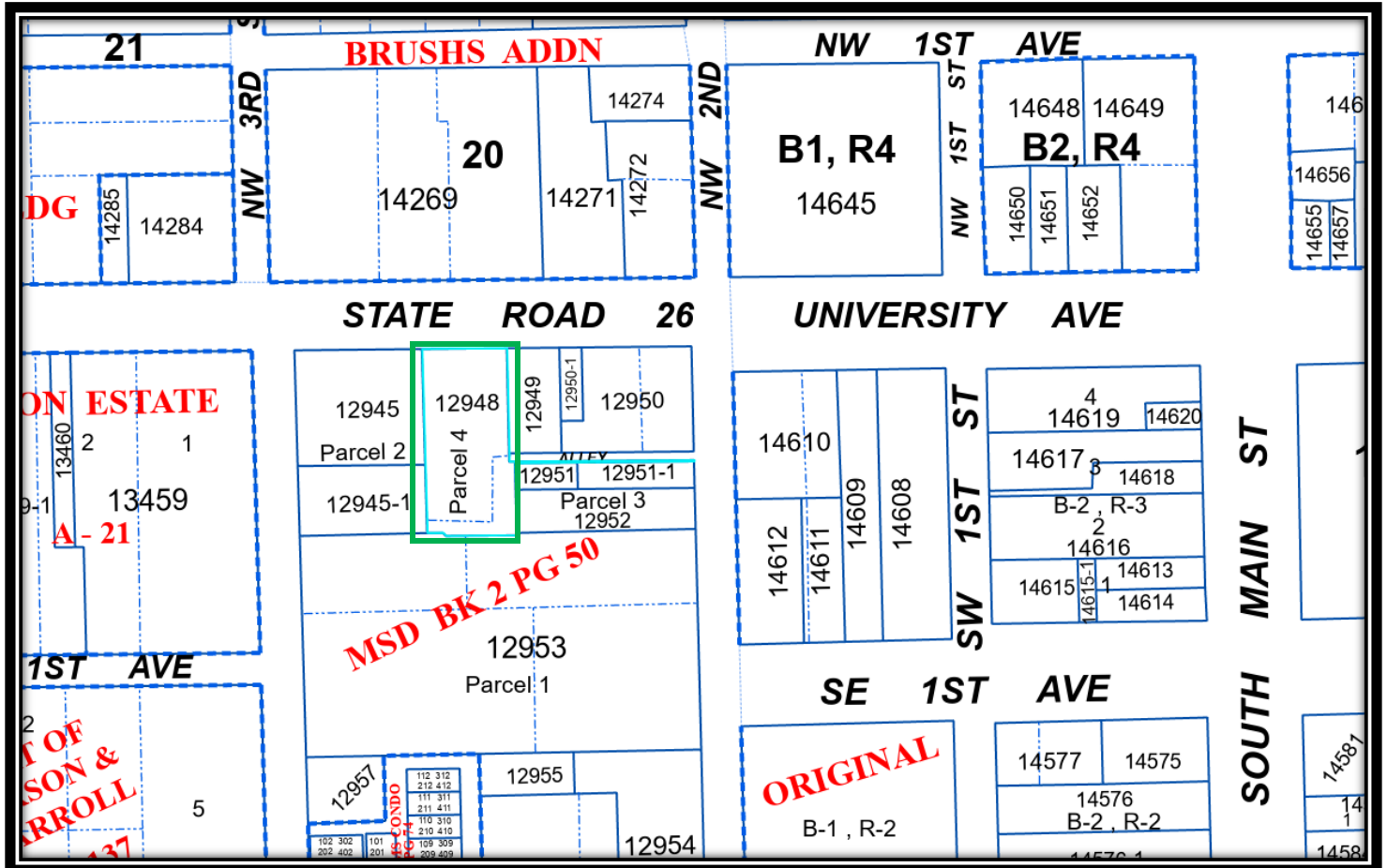
Staff has determined that the Florida Theater is eligible to be listed in the City of Gainesville's Local Register of Historic Places. The Florida Theater meets the objective criteria for designation as spelled out in the Historic Preservation Ordinance, and retains enough of the building's original exterior which contributes to the overall integrity of the Theater's historic character.

***Staff recommends*** that the Historic Preservation Board send this designation request to the City Commission for final approval, with a recommendation to add the Florida Theater, located at 233 West University Avenue, to the Local Register of Historic Places.

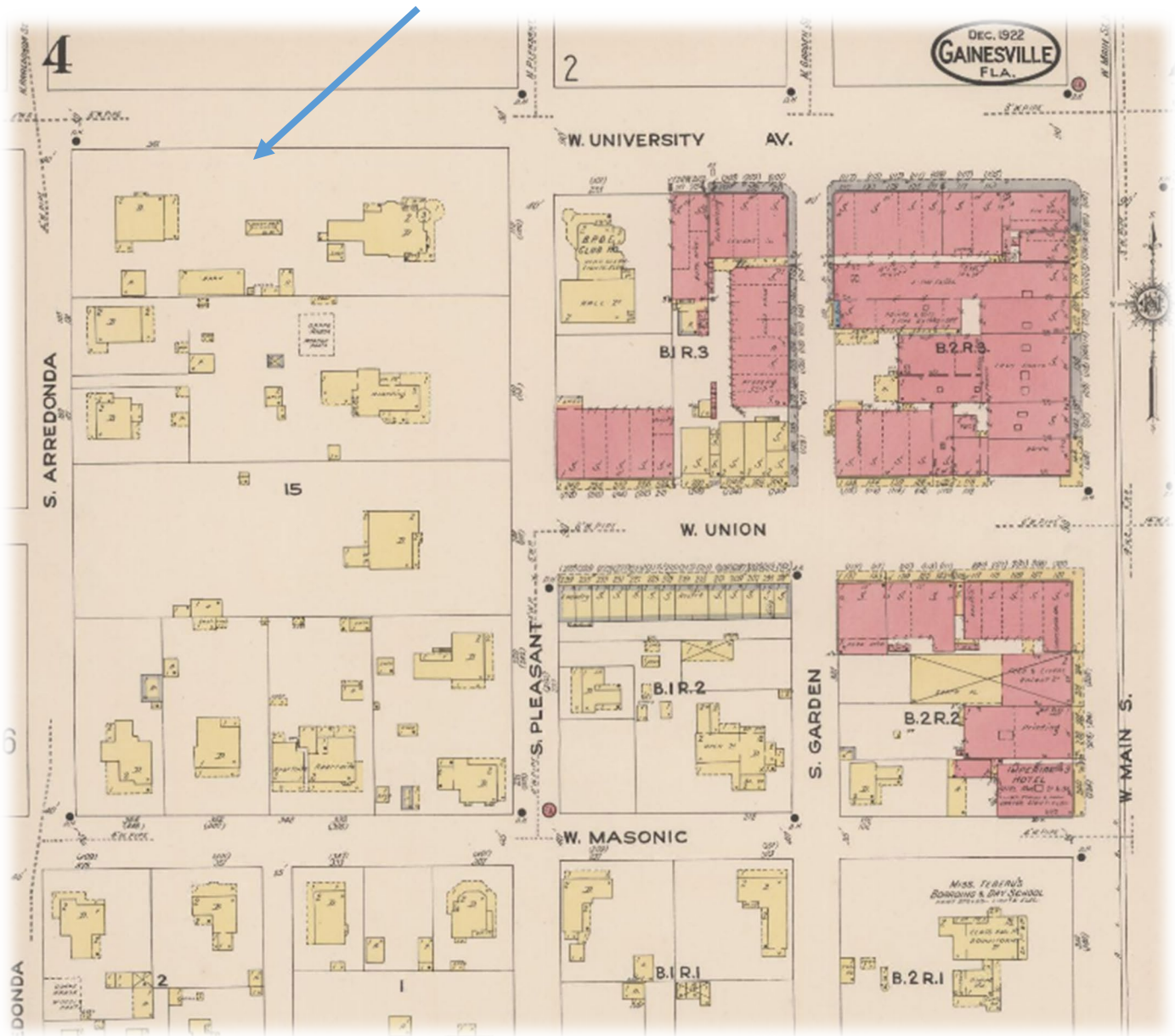
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## APPENDIX A: MAPS



Parcel map of 233 West University Avenue.  
Source: Alachua County Property Appraiser



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from 1922.

The arrow points to where the Theatre would eventually be built.  
This is also when SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Street was still called S. Pleasant Street,  
and when SW 3<sup>rd</sup> Street was called S. Arredonda.

At the time this map was made,  
all the buildings on the block were wood frame (yellow) residential structures (D – Dwellings).

Source: Library of Congress

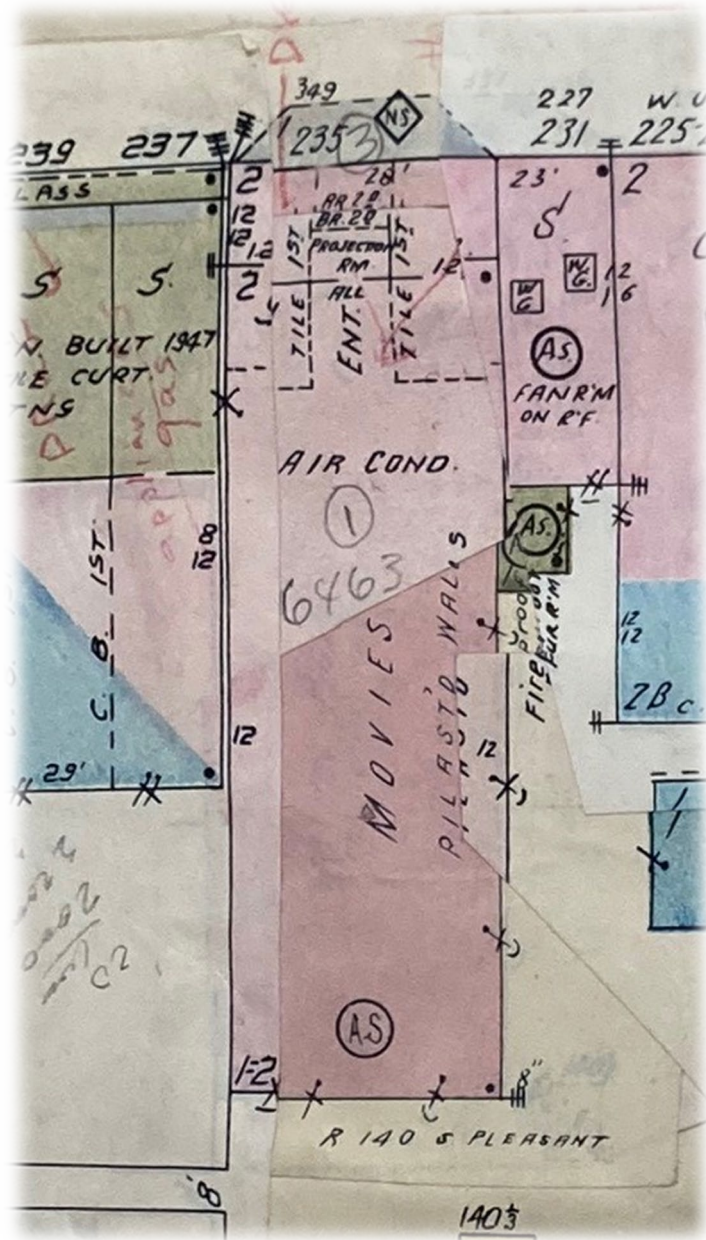




Florida Theatre property on the Sanborn Map from 1928, updated through 1950.  
The building would not have been on the original 1928 version, but would have shown up in one of the subsequent updates when new buildings would get pasted onto the map.

Source: City of Gainesville Office of Historic Preservation



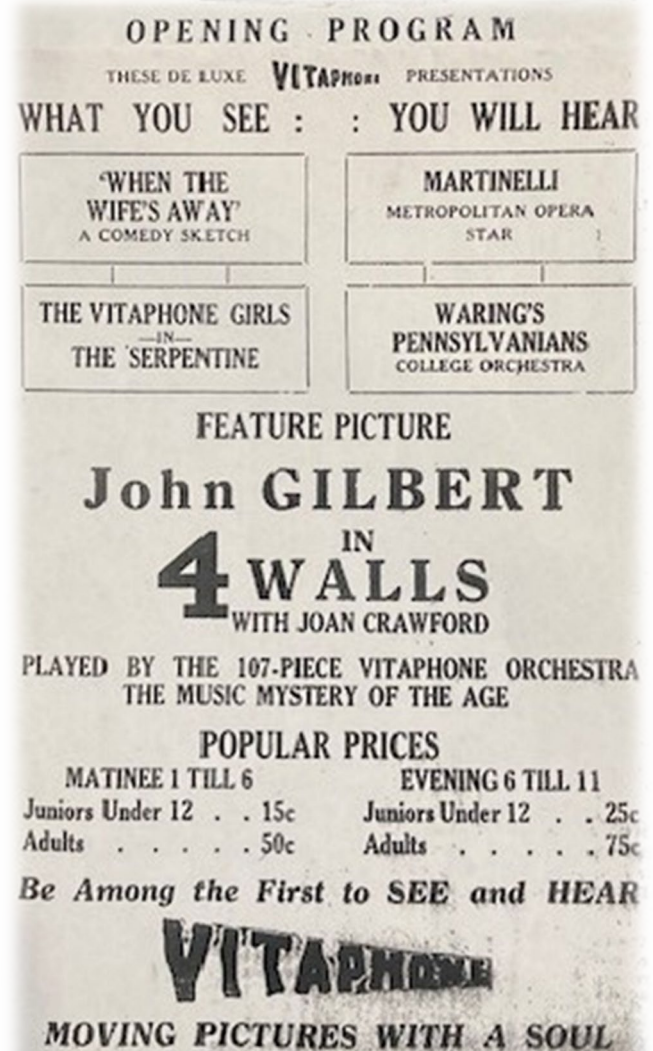


Detail shot of the Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows us the following information:

- 1) The structure was brick (pink buildings);
- 2) It is labeled a Movie House;
- 3) It is noted as having Pilaster Walls (for the height needed for the movie screen);
- 4) It shows a projection room above the main entrance; and
- 5) By 1950 the building had Air Conditioning and Automatic Sprinklers (AS).

Source: City of Gainesville Office of Historic Preservation

## APPENDIX B: HISTORIC FIGURES



**Figures 1 and 2.**

The program from the Grand Opening in 1928, including the  
 feature film "4 Walls" with Joan Crawford

Source: Matheson History Museum Archives





**Figures 3 and 4.**

Program from 1938 –

Patrons could go to the theatre for 12 hours of unsurpassed entertainment!  
(Notice “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” was showing at the Lyric Theatre)

Source: Matheson History Museum Archives



**FLORIDA**  
THEATRE  
GAINESVILLE

PROGRAM WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 20, 1936

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22  
**BANK NIGHT**

There's an epidemic  
of love . . . In Panama!

Adolph Zukor presents

**"LADY  
BE  
CAREFUL"**

A Paramount Picture  
with **LEW AYRES**  
**MARY CARLISLE**  
Larry Crabbe • Benny  
Baker • Grant Withers  
Directed by J. T. Reed

CHAMPION LOVE BOUT! Dynamite Dan, upholding the honor of the Navy; Beautiful Billie Jackson, champion "no" girl of Panama. In a love-fight to the finish!

ADDED: SONG HIT — PETE SMITH SPORT — CARTOON

SUNDAY—MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20-21

**HE'LL MAKE MILLIONS  
OF HEARTS GO "POP"!**

Bob Taylor, America's grand new boy-friend, is back on the screen in his most soul-thrilling romance! What excitement for feminine hearts when he crushes lovely Barbara in his arms!

Barbara **STANWYCK** • Robert **TAYLOR**  
IN *His Brother's Wife*  
with **JEAN HERSHOLT**  
JOSEPH CALLEIA

ADDED: LATEST ISSUE  
"MARCH OF TIME"  
MICKEY MOUSE CARTOON — NEWS

**Figures 5 and 6.**

The program from September 1936

Source: Matheson History Museum Archives





**Figures 7 and 8.**

Program covers from circa 1940 and 1941

Source: Matheson History Museum Archives





**Figure 9.** The Theatre in the 1930s.

The theater held Beauty Pageants, Bank Nights, and other themed events to attract people.

*Source:* Matheson History Museum Archives



**Figure 10.** A 1985 Florida Business Journal article claims this photo was of opening night in 1928, but it could not have been since the marquee is altered and it has the blade sign. Most likely a photo from the early 1930s.

*Source:* Matheson History Museum Archives



**FLORIDA**  
**THEATRE**  
**GAINESVILLE**

PROGRAM WEEK OF OCTOBER 11, 1936

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13  
**BANK NIGHT**

**DRAMA**  
... stripped of  
**FRILLS, packed**  
with **THRILLS!**

Adolph Zukor presents  
*"I'd Give My Life"*  
A Paramount Picture  
with **SIR GUY STANDING**  
**FRANCES DRAKE · TOM BROWN**  
Janet Beecher · Robert Gleckler  
Richard A. Rowland's Production · Directed By Edwin  
J. Marin · Based on the play "THE NOOSE"

**THE INSIDE STORY OF GANGDOM'S NOTORIOUS LADY**  
**"MOUTHPIECE"!** Learn why that beautiful woman lawyer saved  
America's No. 1 racketeer from the chair—so that she could take ...

**ADDED: PETE SMITH NOVELTY — MUSICAL — CARTOON**

**Figure 11.** The program from October 1936  
Source: Matheson History Museum Archives

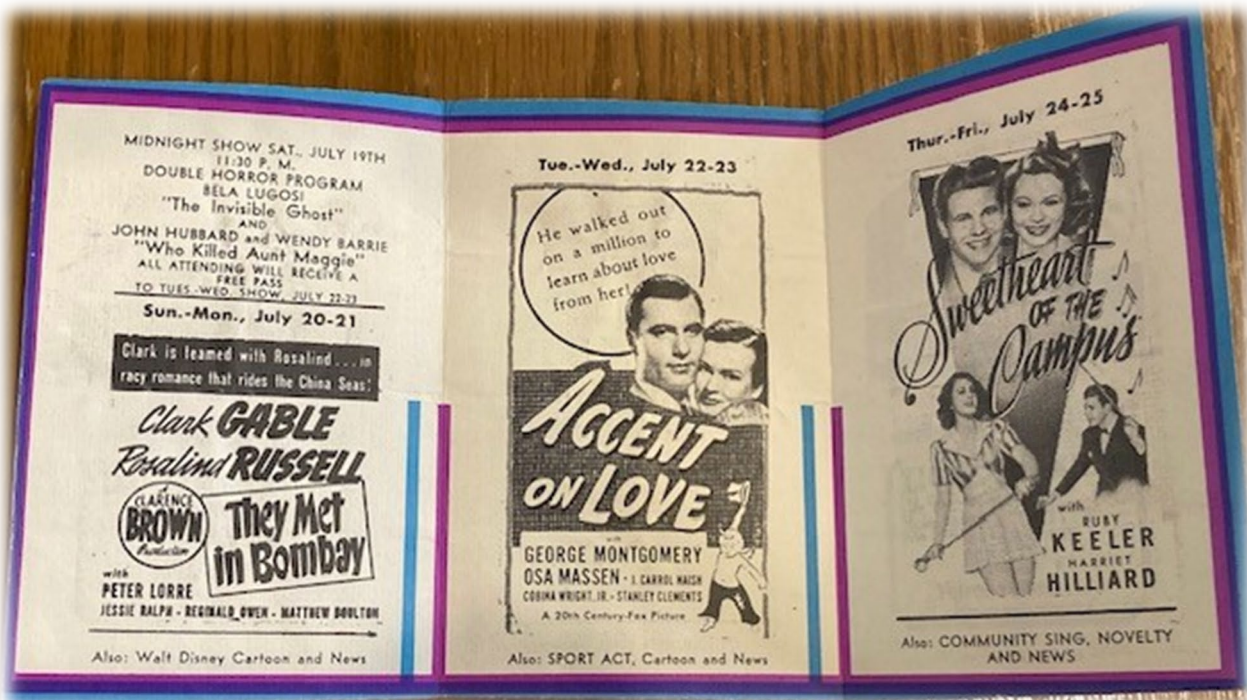




**Figures 12 and 13.**

The program from July 1941

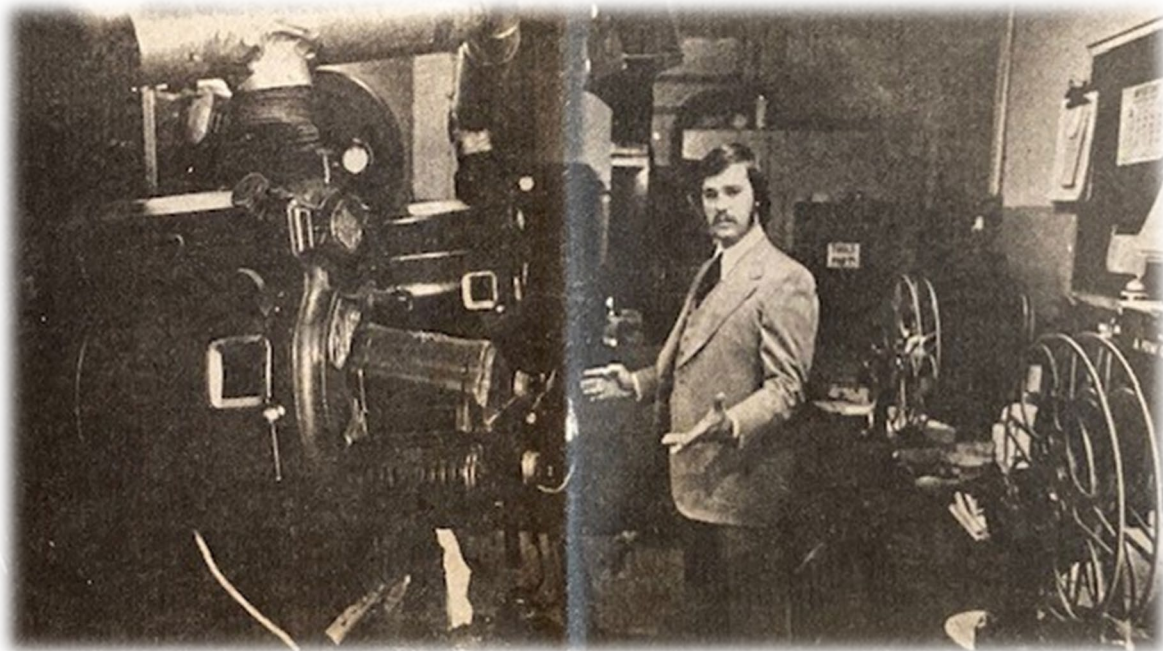
Source: Matheson History Museum Archives





**Figure 14.** Earl Jernigan worked as the projectionist from 1928 to 1963.

*Source:* Matheson History Museum Archives



**Figure 15.** Jim Forsman checking out the projection room as it was found in 1974.

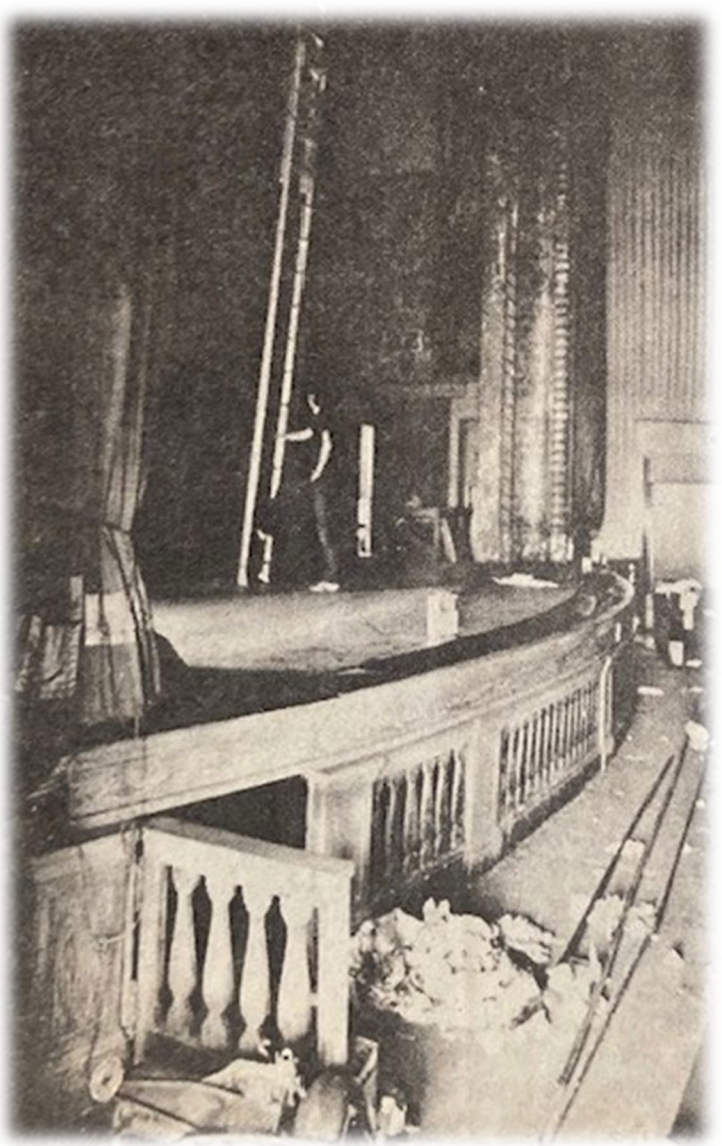
*Source:* Matheson History Museum Archives





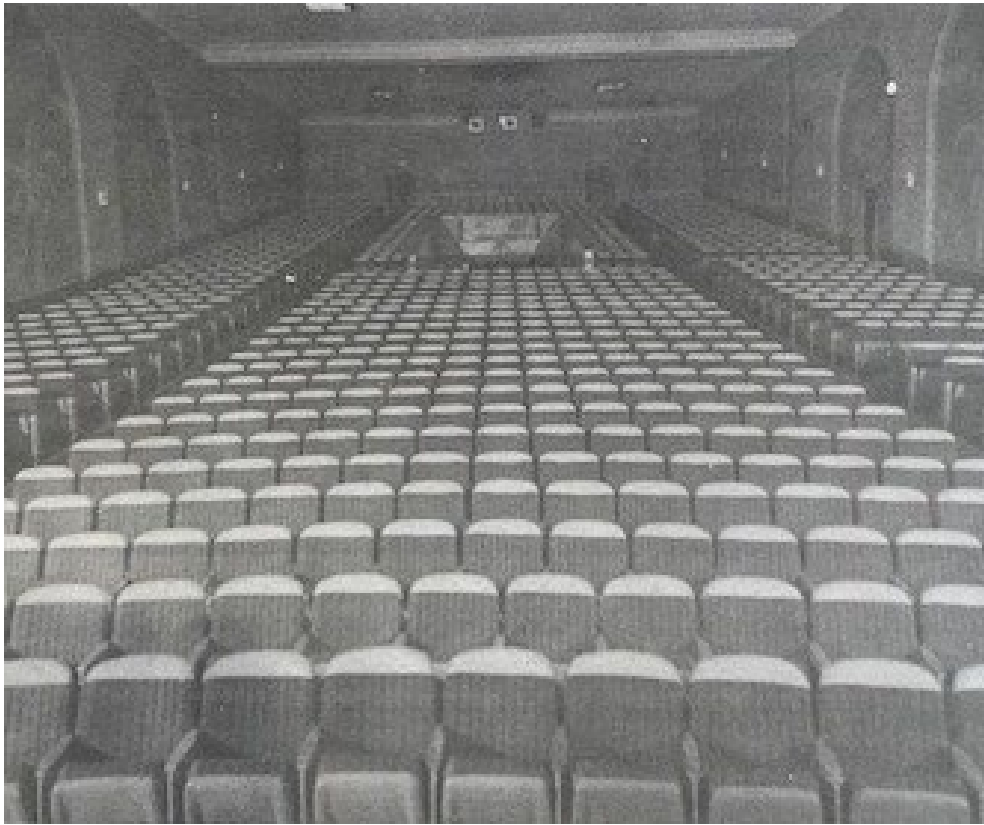
**Figure 16.** Custodian Dave Roberts in 1974. He had been working at the Theatre since 1951.

*Source: Matheson History Museum Archives*



**Figure 17.** The stage at the beginning of the 1974 restoration.

*Source: Matheson History Museum Archives*



**Figure 18.** Interior shot, 1940.  
*Source:* Matheson History Museum Archives



**Figure 19.** Interior shot, date unknown. The upholstered seats were removed in 1990 to make room for a dance floor.  
*Source:* Matheson History Museum Archives