United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **Loew's Jersey Theatre**

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 54 Journal Square ☐ not for publication

city or town City of Jersey City ☐ vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ County Hudson zip code 07306

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I certify that this [X] nomination

☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property

[X] meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Deputy SHPO Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain:)

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [ ] private
- [x] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

_Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals
Other: Baroque Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Brick, terra cotta
roof Built up membrane
other

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8 Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [ ] **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [x] **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria considerations
(mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] **B** removed from its original location.
- [ ] **C** a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] **D** a cemetery.
- [ ] **E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- [ ] **F** a commemorative property.
- [ ] **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1929

Significant Dates

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Rapp and Rapp, architects

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- [ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- [ ] previously listed in the National Register
- [ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
- [ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
  # _____
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data

- [ ] State Historic Preservation Office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [x] Other

Name of repository: New York Public Library; Jersey City Public Library; Newark Public Library; American Theatre Architecture Archive, Theatre Historical Society of America, Elmhurst, Illinois

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 0.85 acres

Latitude / Longitude Coordinates

1 Lat 40.732527 Long -74.065081
2. Lat 40.732674 Long -74.064693
3. Lat 40.732197 Long -74.064031
4. Lat 40.732005 Long -74.064187
Datum : NAD 1983 State Plane New Jersey

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet for Section 10.)

Boundary Justification Statement
(Explain, on the section sheet following the Verbal Boundary Description, how the chosen boundaries meet the requirements for boundary selection and are the most appropriate boundaries for the nominated property or district.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Margaret Newman
organization With HMR Architects date 8.18.21
street & number P.O. Box 222 telephone 609.273.7003
city or town Carversville state PA zip code 18913

Additional Documentation

(Submit the additional items with the completed form that are outlined in the "Standard Order of Presentation" that NJ HPO provides. Each page must contain the name of the nominated property or district, and the State and the county in which the property or district is located. Consult with NJ HPO if you have questions.)

Property Owner

(Either provide the name and address of the property owner here or provide the information separately to NJ HPO. Check with NJ HPO for other requirements. All owners' names and addresses must be provided, including public and non-profit owners, but their presence on the form, itself, is not required).

name City of Jersey City
street & number 280 Grove Street telephone 201.547.5000
city or town Jersey City state NJ zip code 07302

Description Narrative

Summary Paragraph

Loew's Jersey Theatre stands in the heart of Journal Square, Jersey City's entertainment and commercial center. Constructed in 1928-29 from the designs of Rapp and Rapp who ranked among the most important movie palace architects of the 1920's, the Baroque Revival Loew's Jersey features an elaborate terra cotta facade, a sumptuous interior and a large and complete stage designed for live shows and movies with sound. This building is extravagant with intricate exterior terra cotta, polychromatic and metallic interior finishes and all the luxurious amenities and details of a movie palace. A prominent building on the busy Kennedy Memorial Boulevard, Loew's Jersey rises in two sections. The front section is a four-story square housing the entrance, the lobby and the gallery. Behind this, standing several floors above, is the long rectangular bulk of the auditorium.

Setting

Loew's Jersey Theater is a distinctive element of Journal Square, Jersey City's main entertainment center and bustling commercial area. It occupies a long, narrow and curved site on the west side of the six-lane Kennedy Memorial Boulevard, Jersey City's main thoroughfare. The Square is framed by an eclectic mix of 1920s-1970s commercial and office buildings from one to eight stories. The Journal Square PATH (Port Authority Trans-Hudson) train station and plaza, constructed in 1973, stand across Kennedy Boulevard; the train tracks enter under the Square to the north of a department store next to Loew's. To the south, a narrow alley separates Loew's from the neighboring early 20th century office building. Journal Square was a prime spot for construction of theaters with the hundreds of thousands of commuters passing through the area on the Hudson and Manhattan Tube, the predecessor of the PATH system. As a result, among the 20th century office and commercial buildings that border Journal Square are the Loew's Jersey and two other theaters: the Stanley and the State.

Exterior

East Façade

The east facade, fronting on Journal Square, is clad in heavily embellished cream-colored terra cotta. It is divided into three bays. The elaborate center bay sits within a molded frame which is flanked by fluted pilasters. It contains a bouquet of cartouches, garlands, bows and flowers within a classical urn. Cherubs flank the bottom while gargoyles support the top niche and fruit bowl. The framed side bays hold masked faces which sit atop a floriated band. This tri-part façade is capped with asymmetrical pinnacles that rise from urns at the north and south corners. The north corner pinnacle has a taller decorated base. These pinnacles stand behind an ornate frieze which include medallions enclosed with floriated roping topped by scrollwork at the outer bays. At the center of the frieze stands a clock circled in leaf work which is flanked by a narrow floral motif rising from urns and topped by ornate domes. The clock was made by the Seth Thomas Clock Company, a prolific clock company based in Connecticut. The clock is surmounted by an arched terra cotta bell cote supported by floral pilasters and capped with an elaborate scroll. Within the bell cote stand 6-foot-tall bronze and copper statues of Saint George and the Dragon. On the hour, the mechanical dragon rises from a crouch and opens and closes it jaws. At night, a red bulb illuminating the mouth makes the dragon seem to breathe fire. St. George is armor-clad and on horseback. He thrusts his lance at the dragon, accompanied by tolling bells. The figures worked until the early 1960s; they were restored and made operable again in 2001 (Photo 1).

Behind the entrance block stands the taller buff-brick auditorium block. Its east façade has a stepped parapet capped by terra cotta. A terra cotta medallion topped by a scroll adorns the center, standing behind and mirroring the shape of the bell cote. A buff brick chimney rises on the south; it is capped by terra cotta (Photo 1).

The terra cotta façade rises behind the back lit and neon marquee. The original curved marquee was rebuilt in 1949 in the extant larger rectangular form; the underside is original (Historic Photo 3, Historic Drawing A-1[1]). Neon lighting was added to the new marquee except on the underside where the incandescent lighting has been retained unaltered. Red cursive neon "Loew's Jersey" over illuminated yellow panels flank the center section which announces the movies. The new marquee was larger and easier to read, especially for passing cars. An immense original vertical blade sign, taller than the entire facade was removed from the north corner in the mid-1960s. Its elimination has enhanced the carved beauty of the terra cotta which it partially obscured.

The marquee shelters the sidewalk creating a pseudo interior space which begins the theater experience. Hundreds of lights in the underside of the marquee illuminate the central rounded ticket booth clad in bronze flanked by bronze doors and poster display cases. The ticket booth projects at the center of the recessed entrance with bronze panels supporting large planes of glass divided by fluted bronze columns with floriated bronze bases. The center bronze panel has a shield with roping and floral adornments. The booth is flanked by four original bronze and glass doors on each side. In 2013, these doors were restored which included new replicated hardware. Each door has a bronze "push" sign at its center. This hardware had been removed; it was reconstructed in 2013. An arched transom crowns the entrance; it is segmented in bronze at each set of doors and the ticket booth.

To the north of the central entrance, still enclosed by the marquee, is an exit bay. Framed in black marble over a granite base topped with floriated pressed bronze and bronze framed glass cases for movie posters, the double bronze and glass doors lead to the exit passage, an important programmatic element of the complex circulation system of the building (Photo 2).

To the south of the entrance stands a separate one-story commercial storefront. It is an original part of the building as noted by the continuous ornamental terra cotta cornice. Roughly half of the storefront stands outside the marquee, architecturally expressing it as a separate space. Historically it was a soda fountain/luncheonette; it provided a place for theater patrons to eat before concession stands were introduced to the movies in the 1930s. It remained a vital part of the Loew's Jersey experience through the lifetime of the theater (Historic Photo 19, 20, 26, 27 and 30). The store front has been significantly altered over the years. Below the original terra cotta cornice sits a glass-paneled frieze framed by original copper ornament where signs used to announce the store. Below the frieze, an aluminum and glass entrance door stands to the south with a metal clad storefront to the north. It is unclear whether the metal storefront covers the original granite base and copper ornament or replaces these features. Originally the entrance stood at the chamfered corner of the building but today stucco covers this corner and continues down the alley along the south side of the storefront (Photo 3).

North Elevation

[1] The Historic Drawings are from Friends of Loew's Archives

The north elevation contains the front lobby block backed by the taller auditorium block. They are both clad in buff brick with terra cotta embellishments. The lobby block is adorned by three terra cotta framed arched panels, partially obscured by a mid-20th century, low-rise department store. A scrolled medallion caps the center block. A terra cotta frieze with center medallion crowns this elevation. The medallions match those on the façade.

Behind the front lobby block rises the auditorium block. Like the lobby, it is buff brick. The north elevation has three terra cotta framed panels, similar to those on the lobby block. The panels are each pointed and crowned by a shield encircled by leaves. Between each arch is a pilaster topped by a molded profile. Three pilasters complete the west end of the block. These decorative elements are topped by a terra cotta band. The elevation is capped by a terra cotta cornice with three shields aligned with the shields of the three arched panels below. Like the east end, the west end of the auditorium block has a stepped parapet. This conceals the prominent curve of the auditorium's roof.

South Elevation
The south elevation, adjacent to a narrow alley, is utilitarian with very little embellishment. The storefront section of the building stands at the front of the theater. At the east, it is one story covered with textured stucco and capped by the original decorative terra cotta cornice. Moving west, the parging stops and the building becomes white brick, still capped by the original terra cotta cornice. Beyond this, the building becomes two stories. It is constructed of brick-faced cinder block and capped by a brick parapet.

To the north of the storefront section stands the lobby block of the theater. The east front corner is a continuation of the façade. The corner pinnacle stands behind the medallions of the cornice capping the ornate frieze. Below this, a single framed terra cotta panel matches those of the façade. Supported by a decorative bracket, the frame encloses a masked face which sits atop a floriated band. Behind this panel of elaborate terra cotta, one rectangular open frame of terra cotta adorns the buff brick. The rest of this block is plain buff brick (Historic Photo 30).

Continuing west is the taller auditorium block of buff brick decorated with a belt course of vertical bricks topped by a second course of vertical bricks adorned with white brick squares. A series of exterior, paired metal doors pierce the ground floor; the openings are original but the flush metal doors were installed in the 2010s. The original enclosed fire escape looms above.

West Elevation
The transition between the south and west elevation is curved, accommodating the irregular site. At this curve, the brick switches from buff to red. On the west elevation, red brick walls stand atop a parged foundation. There are buff brick frames with white corner brick squares to enliven the plain elevation. At the northwest corner, the enclosed, exterior fire escape crawls up and around the rounded end. At the ground level, several door openings pierce the foundation; they are enclosed by plain steel doors, date unknown.

Interior
One enters the theater into a shallow vestibule with its original finishes of black and white marble paneled from floor to ceiling. The ceiling is ornate cast plaster with floral medallions anchoring an oblong mirror that is framed by run plaster with a design of long narrow leaves. Additional run plaster banding includes flowers, plumage and seashells.

The ceiling is anchored by a flower and leaf plaster crown molding. A simple 5-light chandelier is centered on the mirror; this is not an original fixture but it is unknown when it was added. The floor is terrazzo, installed in the 1960s. This vestibule is the prelude to the big show of the theater. (Photo 4, Historic Photo 4).

A ticket booth anchors each end of the vestibule; they are located within the two bases of the arched entrance into the theater. Clad in the same black and white marble, they retain their original bronze and glass access doors. At the north end, the ticket window is no longer extant. At the south, the window remains. This southern booth is connected to the theater offices which stand to the south, in the area of the original storefront. A large original glass and bronze display box for movie posters and announcements festoons the south end while at the north end, a pair of original bronze doors access the exit passage.

Beneath the marbled arched opening, another series of original bronze doors access the lobby. Like the front doors, they are capped with a glass transom divided by bronze mullions. The northern-most pair of doors were restored in 2013 and the "push" hardware reconstructed. The grand lobby rises three stories to a rotunda-like rococo ceiling still decorated in its original color scheme of grey and gold with touches of pale blue and rose with gold and aluminum leaf, cherubs and plaster medallions. Around the oval shaped lobby rise scagliola marbleized Corinthian columns with marble and cast plaster bases. They support the arcaded mezzanine with ornate bronzed railings encircling and overlooking the grand lobby. The extravagant décor includes marble wainscot, gold niches, ornate bronze screens, cast plaster air vents, gold medallions, gold brackets, fleur-de-lis, floral motifs, urns, cartouches and gold roping. There are faces and putti, shields and fluted pilasters. It is an explosion of features. Hanging from the center of the lobby is a highly ornate crystal and bronze chandelier with six tiers of lights. Heavy red and gold velvet valences drape most of the openings between the columns. The floor is terrazzo, added in the 1960s, and red carpet; originally it was patterned carpet (Photo 5, Historic Photos 5 and 6).

To the south sweeps the grand staircase to the promenade of the mezzanine foyer; these stairs skillfully turn through the mid-section of the building as it curves to the right to accommodate its crescent shaped lot. A broad white marble newel supporting an ornate light fixture announces the stairs along with the handsome decorative cast bronze guardrails. Late 1990s wood newel posts run up the center of the stairs. The walls have floriated brocade fabric panels with floriated metallic-leaf compo borders.[2] A gold mosaic niche adorns the stair landing (Photo 6, Historic Photo 7). Adjacent to the stair, standing to the east, is an accessible toilet in what was originally the assistant manager's office. This conversion was made in the 2000s.

To the north, another stair provides secondary access to the mezzanine. On the walls, marble base, stringer and wainscot anchor the fabric panels with metallic-leaf compo borders. A cast bronze handrailing, matching the one on the south stair, bends as the north stairs turns on itself as rises to the mezzanine foyer.

[2] These composition ornament "compo" borders are a mix of chalk, glue, linseed oil and resin and while cheaper than carved wood or plaster ornament, they were still meticulously hand-made and applied (Jonathan Thornton and William Adair, "Applied Decoration for Historic Interiors: Preservation Composition Ornament," National Park Service Preservation Brief 34, 1).

Beyond the stairs, one enters the one-story orchestra foyer. Gilded fluted pilasters and square columns support the gold-leaf ceiling with embossed medallions. The walls are blue with red brocade panels framed in floriated gold over marble wainscot; the floor is red carpet. New, paired, flush metal doors within original openings provide exterior exit at the south and stair. Original kalamein (metal wrapped wood making them fireproof) access the basement at the south while kalomein and glass doors at the west access the auditorium; these are faux-grained to look like wood. Original doors throughout the theater are grained kalamein.

One enters the auditorium under the balcony with its elaborate ceiling of cast plaster medallions, gold panels, decoratively painted niches with incandescent lighting and gold-leafed plaster details. Painted panels line the walls with gold-leaf borders (Photo 7, Historic Drawing A-2). The line visible in the ceiling shows where a wall was constructed in 1974 to divide this space into two theaters. Two new projection booths were built at the same time at the rear, adjacent to the orchestra foyer; they remain and are now used for storage.

Beyond the overhead balcony is the breathtaking soaring auditorium (Historic Photo 9). With intricate Baroque Revival details, the auditorium is vast in scale and retains the remarkable ability to astonish those who enter. The ceiling is an endless array of coffers, elaborate cast and run plaster, compo, gilding, medallions, Greek crosses, niches, murals and amazing details topped by a Neo-Classical dome (Historic Photo 11, Historic Drawing A-3). The balcony fills the east end of the auditorium. Massive, with an upper and lower balcony, it rises in a great sweep to the top rear of the house. It is a continuation of the elaborate auditorium punctuated by six large arches in which elaborately carved walnut and gold canopies are draped with festoons of red velvet trimmed with gold applique tassels and fringe. Concealed multi-colored lights were designed to delicately illuminate these arches through sheets of gold silk gauze and silver cloth hung behind the drapery. An elaborate gold plaster railing frames the lower balcony, undulating with gold roping framing circular openings (Historic Photo 10).

The wide proscenium opening, one of the largest in any theater at the time of construction, anchors the western end. The proscenium arch forms a beautifully carved framework over the stage and is set off by scrolled and molded cartouches and veined marble panels (Historic Photo 8). It was designed to accommodate the lavish stage spectacles. Flanking either side, reminiscent of the coveted boxes of traditional theaters, are the organ pipe chambers. They consist of four ornamented and fluted columns supporting a lavishly carved cornice, surmounted by a shell canopy. From the cornices hang velvet valences and drapes embroidered in gold and a crystal trimmed gauze curtain backed with silver cloth. They are embellished with putti, extravagant gold-leafed details, and original light fixtures. The organ console, the piano and the entire orchestra floor are mounted on separate lifts which can be worked independently or together. The original Robert Morton organ was removed from the theater but an identical model was found, restored and installed in 2007. The organ lift revolves. Within the auditorium, the lighting fixtures are crystal and bronze with illumination mainly indirect. The original decoration of the auditorium, done by Battisti Studios of New York, is almost entirely preserved and in good condition except for dirt, tarnish and minor areas of paint loss and some water damage (Photos 7 and 8).

With a potential audience of three thousand, crowd management was especially important at the Loew's Jersey. The balcony is reached from two levels and several entry points. From the mezzanine, the balcony is accessed from two side halls with paneled walls. From the balcony foyer, up one level from the mezzanine, stairs at the north and south

provide access to the upper balcony of the auditorium. Even these secondary, vertical spaces are luxuriant with molded plaster ceilings and fabric paneled walls with gold-leafed borders. All the stairs have the cast bronze balustrade that matches the grand stair. The balcony foyer overlooks the grand lobby. While less extravagant, the paneled walls with gold borders and velvet curtains still convey a sense of luxury. From the foyer, stand two entries into the upper balcony. Above the lower balcony, these spaces are closed to the public and generally, have not been touched or used since the theater closed in 1986.

The mezzanine and promenade galleries to the musician's lobby continue the luxury of the theater with lush ornamentation and the important amenities of the movie palace like lounges and smoking rooms. The mezzanine foyer has the same red carpet as the orchestra foyer. The ceiling is a vibrant gold and green with embossed plaster medallions. Gold pilasters support the ceiling. Red brocade panels with gold borders lay in front of bright blue walls (Photo 9, Historic Photos 12 and 13). Roughly centered on the curved west wall of the foyer was another extravagance: a fountain. While the fountain itself was removed in 1974, the basin stands, with the front portion removed, within a marble and gold mosaic niche. Flanking green and gold niches are separated from the fountain basin by broad gold pilasters (Historic Photo 14). The fountain and niches separate the suites of men's and women's restrooms which include separate washrooms, toilets and lounges and an additional octagonal cosmetic room for the women. Luxuries of the period, telephone booths framed by a gilded floral band of run plaster also survive off the mezzanine foyer. Their glass and kalamein doors are faux-grained.

The women's rooms stand to the south. The toilet and washrooms have original green and cream tiles laid in diagonal squares. The square, glossy mustard-colored tile walls are also original. Original marble stall partitions also survive. The lounge retains the original marble baseboards, marble fireplace and mirror at the over mantel. Decorative cast plaster pilasters, also original, frame the mirror. The floriated run plaster at the crown molding and plaster ceiling medallion also remain. The brocade panels are no longer extant, but the wood paneled wainscot remains. The floor is carpet (Historic Photo 15). The octagonal cosmetic room also is largely intact. Original black marble wainscot and pilasters support elaborate plaster capitals adorned with clam shell designs. The embossed plaster crown molding with clam shells and ivy carry a run plaster roping topped by the octagonal ceiling with large clam shells separated by embossed plaster ribs. Like the lounge, the floor is now red carpet (Historic Photo 16).

On the men's side, the toilets and washrooms retain their original tile floors and walls. Original marble stall partitions also survive. The men's lounge also is largely intact. Evoking an Elizabethan interior, the original wood-grained plaster-paneling and fireplace remain as do the decorative arched panels over the mantel. The elaborate plaster crown molding and ceiling are intact and include egg and dart, lattice plaster and a floriated frieze. The floor has changed; it was originally a larger tile that has been changed to a smaller, parquet-like pattern of quarry tile (Historic Photo 17).

Moving east, the gallery encircles the grand lobby. The narrow halls include the scagliola marble columns that rise from the lobby with their elaborate gold Corinthian capitals. Between each column is the ornate bronze balustrade topped by the red and gold velvet valances or lambrequins. The outer walls are curved with mirrors and brocade panels framed in gold. The original ceiling is coffered with run gold molded plaster and gold ceiling medallions (Photo 10). At the east and west ends of both north and south galleries, there are niches that overlook the lobby with further elaboration including turquoise paint with gold plaster detailing featuring shields, shells and other floriated

and curving designs. Chairs, benches, and sofas originally lined the gallery walls and the openings were hung with thick velvet draperies. Such materials conveyed a sense of luxury and absorbed sound, creating a subdued environment.

At the east end of the mezzanine, over the entrance, stands the musicians' lobby (Photo 11, Historic Photo 18). This room housed musicians who played music as an additional feature of the theater experience. Presenting original mirrored and brocaded walls, elaborate plaster paneling, gold pilasters and a classically inspired domed ceiling with gold banding and decorations, this room originally held art works, lounge chairs and a piano for the diversion of patrons waiting for the next show. The marble baseboards remain; the carpet is now red. The marble fireplace surround has been removed and the firebox enclosed. The surrounding plaster ornament, brocade panel and red velvet curtains with gold tassels and fringe remain over the fireplace (Photo 12; Historic Photo 18).

The public spaces of the Loew's Jersey are numerous and vast. Similarly, the back of the house of Loew's is equally large and complex. Many of the spaces have been abandoned and unused for decades. The sub-basement houses a rehearsal room and dressing rooms in the northwest corner. These are simple spaces with plaster walls with paint and tile floors. For the most part, they have been unused for a long time; the finishes are original and deteriorating.

Under the stage, around the perimeter of the basement, are more dressing rooms and amenities like a musicians' room and a pinocle room. Some are used; others, abandoned. Most have simple, deteriorating original finishes. Directly under the stage are the trap room and property rooms, used as they were historically, as is the orchestra pit. Under the auditorium seating is a vast chamber that is a plenum, an integral component of the original ventilation system of the theater. At the eastern end of the basement stand many mechanical spaces with the usher and usherette's room which retain their original simple finishes. They are mostly used for storage today.

In the upper floors, at the top of the upper balcony, the press room has been abandoned for decades. Above this are rooms that are still used today. They include the projection room and rewind room. The plain plaster walls and ceiling remain; the floors have been replaced with newer vinyl flooring. These spaces continue to be used as they always have been.

Integrity Assessment of Loew's Jersey

At the time of its opening, and for many years thereafter, the Loew's Jersey was filled with a costly collection of European antiques and art objects, some of them obtained from the Vanderbilt mansion on New York's Fifth Avenue, demolished in the mid-1920's. Most notable was the display of silver and bronze figures, Dresden china, marble statuary and oil paintings that lined the mezzanine gallery, music room and lounges. An 18th century French Buhl clock, eight feet tall stood in the lobby foyer until recent years but has been removed along with most of the other art objects, gold console tables, sofas and lounge chairs. While most of the furniture and art are gone, the Loew's Jersey retains integrity as a movie palace. Its location and setting remain; it is still an important anchor of Journal Square, Jersey City's bustling entertainment and commercial center. Its design remains fully intact. Except for the carpet and some of the brocade wall panels, the vast majority of the materials are original. Restoration of finishes has been limited to spot painting making even the finishes largely original. With this sensitive approach, the original workmanship also remains intact as does the feeling. The Loew's Jersey feels like a sumptuous old

theater where decoration is an essential part of the movie going experience. The association also remains intact; the Loew's retains its association with a bygone era.

Construction Chronology

The Loew's Jersey opened on September 28, 1929. From the original drawings that have been uncovered, it is evident that changes were made from the original design during the construction process. Some of this was done to accommodate sound for movies, a technological innovation that occurred between design and construction. Sound equipment that was installed was not planned for. However, the reason for other changes is less clear. For instance, lights were called to be installed directly above the orchestra, in front of the proscenium arch, which would have illuminated the orchestra pit. There are controls on the board backstage to turn these on, and wires actually exist up to where they would be, but no holes were opened in the ceiling, and no fixtures were ever installed. Additionally, original drawings of the main level of the auditorium show it was intended to have four aisles but five were constructed, including two side aisles. Other changes can be found in the lower level. Here a lower lounge with telephones, a coat room, restroom, drinking fountain, and additional usher's rooms were planned for but never built.

While changes that were made from drawings to as built can readily be determined, other evolutionary changes must be gleaned from investigations of the building. According to Colin Egan of Friends of Loew's (FOL), the non-profit group who lease the building from the City of Jersey City, about ten years after the grand opening, there was a big painting campaign. All efforts were made to match the original paint which is why Mr. Egan believes it occurred soon after construction. This painting may have been done when the concession stand was installed at some point in the 1930s or when the new air conditioning was installed in 1949. No historic concession stand remains today; the existing stand was installed after 2001. Over the years, the seats were also reupholstered.

In 1949-50, the current marquee was installed on top of the original marquee. This may have been chain-wide. The Loew's Kings Theatre in Brooklyn, also designed by Rapp and Rapp, had the same marquee. Neon was also introduced throughout the auditorium. Because neon was included in the new marquee while the original only had incandescent, this could have been done at the same time

Likely in the 1960s, the terrazzo floor was added at the vestibule and the grand lobby. This date is assumed because of the style of the tile. At some point in the mid-1960s, the blade sign which was attached to the taller tower above the marquee was removed.

Beyond the one initial repainting campaign ten years into the life of the building, additional painting campaigns occurred but these were limited in scope and typically involved spot painting as needed. The carpet was changed several times; a small sample of the original survives in storage at the theater. In addition, the velvet drapery throughout the building has been reduced; it used to be more extensive and now is generally limited to lambrequins.

The Loew's Jersey continued to run as a single theater movie house until 1974 when it was divided into a triplex. It was closed for four months in 1974 and when it was reopened, it had three theaters. Under the balcony, a center

wall was installed dividing it into two theaters each seating 524. Two new projection booths were built at the back; they remain today. The third theater was the main screen in the balcony with a seating capacity of 1,078. The stage was closed off and not used. The original organ, which hadn't been used in years, was removed from the theater at this time. Also, during these renovations, original mushroom air vents were filled in, probably to control sound, and new holes were installed. Today, the returns remain filled at the rear. At the front, they remain open. Surprisingly, the "triplexing" was quite sensitive, and proved to be reversible.

The Loew's Jersey Theatre remained a first-run movie house until 1986 when it closed. The building was sold and threatened with demolition. Concerned citizens assembled to try to save the building. During the fight to save it 1986-1993, the Loew's Jersey was closed without power, heat or water. Today, some original light fixtures remain as do most of the seats and the original kalamein doors with faux graining. The finishes are largely original as is the existing drapery. A few pieces of original furniture remain, stored under the balcony. Only one door was lost and at one point, vandals tried to steal the original bronze railing from the grand staircase. They were stopped and some of the bronze pieces saved. All other original features remain.

In 1990, temporary electric was installed in the theater and porta-johns were set up in the lobby. Understanding the importance of getting the public into the theater, FOL concentrated their efforts on the lobby where they held early shows. With $2 million from the city and a New Jersey Historic Trust grant, new electric and a new boiler for heat were installed. The exterior was restored including repairs to the terra cotta and the installation of a new roof. Through skilled and unskilled labor, FOL and volunteers restored the projection booth, original organ lift, light board, stage, lighting and rigging. The seats also were restored. Those to the rear are original but reupholstered. At the front, the seats had been removed when the theater was converted to a triplex; the existing seats are replacements.

When FOL first arrived at the theater, the original Morton "wonder" organ was gone (it is now located in the Arlington Theatre in Santa Barbara, California). The orchestra pit was boarded over and it was unknown that it could rise. After extensive work, the orchestra pit lifts were returned to use and an organ was acquired. It came from the Paradise Theater in the Bronx and is an identical organ to the original. It had been moved to a warehouse in Chicago but the Garden State Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society was able to purchase it. After an eleven-year restoration, it was installed at the Loew's in 2007.

With the help of a decorative painting company and paint conservator, FOL restored the paint on the side walls under the balcony. They converted the assistant manager's office to an accessible bathroom; this is the only bathroom located on the ground level. Historically, there were no bathrooms on the main level. At the mezzanine level, FOL stripped the bathroom tiles and even the marble stalls which had all been coated with numerous layers of paint. Volunteers removed 27 layers of paint from the front door. In the lower levels, FOL added two rooms along the alley along with the addition of a door between two existing rooms. The rest of these levels remain original. Within the auditorium, FOL installed the movie screen in 2001.

In 2011, HMR Architects completed a Historic Structure Report for the Loew's. Following this, the main entrance doors were restored as were the bronze lobby doors. In 2010 and 2017, there were structural repairs made to the storefronts and side building. In 2019, the marquee roof was replaced and emergency lighting installed.

Significance Statement

Summary Paragraph

Loew's Jersey Theatre opened in September 1929 in Journal Square, the commercial and entertainment heart of Jersey City. Constructed as a Loew's "Wonder Theatre" by architects Rapp and Rapp, Loew's Jersey Theatre is significant under Criterion C as a building type: a movie palace. With a seating capacity of 3,100, Loew's Jersey features an extraordinary terra cotta façade, exceptionally elaborate Baroque Revival interior details, a sophisticated circulation system and luxurious amenities. Loew's Jersey was the third and final movie theater constructed in Journal Square; it followed the State Theater built in 1922 and the Stanley Theater built in 1928. The State had 2,169 seats and was well known for its large Moller organ. The Stanley with 4,332 seats was an Atmospheric theater with a restrained interior. With its rich, over-the-top finishes and deluxe amenities, Loew's Jersey outshone the other two theaters, reaching the pinnacle of movie palace design and made Journal Square even more of a destination. In addition to being a movie palace, Loew's Jersey is also significant as a work of Rapp and Rapp, the pre-eminent American movie palace designers in 1929. As the largest and finest surviving movie palace in New Jersey and the only Rapp and Rapp-designed theater in the state, the Loew's Jersey Theatre is significant at the state level. The period of significance for the Loew's Jersey is 1929, the year the theater opened.

Loew's Jersey remained a first-run movie house throughout its life as a theater. It flourished through the Depression and World War II and began to falter in the 1950s with the rise of television. In 1974, the Loew's Jersey was partitioned into three screens and finally closed in 1986. After a seven-year fight to save the building headed by the non-profit group Friends of Loew's (FOL), the City of Jersey City bought the theater and granted FOL a long-term lease. FOL was able to reopen the theater with limited programming in 2001. FOL continues to operate the theater in this capacity today.

Journal Square, Jersey City

Loew's Jersey is located in what is today the commercial heart of Jersey City, Journal Square. At the turn of the 20th century, this area of Jersey City was residential with 19th century Victorian neighborhoods among scattered 18th century farmhouses. These were vestiges of Bergen Square, the first chartered municipality in the state settled in 1660. With the development of the Hudson and Manhattan Tubes, the predecessor of today's PATH system, and the construction of the local Summit Avenue Station in 1912, the residential character of the area began to change. Mayor Frank Hague, Jersey City's mayor from 1917 to 1947, championed the idea of developing this area into the new commercial heart of the city. Local boulevards were widened and area buildings were demolished for the construction of modern buildings and office towers. In 1921, the construction of the office building for the *Jersey Journal*, Jersey City's newspaper, marked the first commercial building. In 1923, the intersection of Kennedy Boulevard and Bergen Avenue was widened to form the "square," named in honor of the anchor of the district: Journal Square.

With hundreds of thousands of commuters passing through the area on the Hudson and Manhattan Tube, the bus, on the trolley and eventually in cars, Journal Square was a prime spot for the construction of theaters. The first, the State Theater (now demolished), was constructed in 1922 north of the Square on Kennedy Boulevard. The

Stanley followed in 1928; it too was located on Kennedy Boulevard just north of the State Theater. The Stanley is now used as church. In 1929, the Loew's Jersey was constructed right on the Square. These theaters were a defining element of Journal Square which along with the Jersey City's finest shops and restaurants gave this area high cachet.[1] Journal Square remained the commercial, entertainment and transportation hub of Jersey City through the 1960s. The *Jersey Bounce*, a hit song of the 1940s, mentions Journal Square in its lyrics as the place where New Jersey's rhythm begins (Historic Photo 1).

Journal Square began to decline in the 1970s. As with all American urban centers, Jersey City was the victim of increased suburbanization and the loss of population and business. The Journal Square Transportation Center which opened between 1973 and 1975 included the Journal Square PATH station, a bus station serving NJ Transit and the headquarters of the Port Authority Trans-Hudson Corporation. Its construction contributed to the decline of Journal Square by moving the train-bus interchange underground, and thus the pedestrians, away from other commercial activities around the Square. This decline continued until at the turn of the 21st century; new investments in Jersey City have resulted in Journal Square making a slow but steady recovery.

History of Motion Picture Houses

The twenty-five years between 1895 and 1920 saw the evolution of motion pictures from minute-long shorts to feature length and from playing in other locations, among other entertainment, to becoming the main attraction in their own movie palaces. It witnessed the concurrent rise of the movies and demise of vaudeville as theater for the masses. It also saw the architectural evolution of the movie theater—a result of influences from classic and vaudeville theater, the nickelodeon and the travelling show—which peaked with the movie palaces of the 1920s.

In the mid-19th century, vaudeville evolved out of the variety show and music hall tradition. With a strong working-class audience, the early shows were bawdy, for-men-only affairs. By the 1880s, they had been cleaned up and were now considered suitable for women, although still working-class entertainment. Shows included singing, dancing, comedy and novelty acts. Vaudeville theaters were usually designed in a historic style often in the classical mode to give it an air of respectability like that of the traditional play and opera theaters. Added to this classical architectural vocabulary were the vaudevillian characteristics of elaborate displays, bright electric lights, attraction boards and posters. Vaudeville theaters had lounges, foyers, promenades, check rooms, writing rooms, telephone rooms, ladies' parlors and gentlemen's smoking rooms, amenities that like the historical references in the architecture, added legitimacy to the entertainment. All of these were major influences on the movie palace.[2]

At the turn of the 20th century, motion pictures began to be shown as part of other established forms of popular entertainment like vaudeville theater and penny arcades. They began as shorts, lasting only a few minutes. These early works didn't necessarily tell a story. Instead, they were a display for the technology: a moving horse, a woman running in the field. One early moving picture machine was Thomas Edison's Kinetoscope. On April 14,

[1] Jersey City Chamber of Commerce, *Jersey City Magazine*, Volume XIV, Number 9 (September 1929), 14.
[2] Charlotte Herzog, "The Movie Palace and the Theatrical Sources of Its Architectural Style," *Cinema Journal*, Volume 20, No. 2 (Spring 1981), 22.

1894, it was used for the first time in New York City. Viewers dropped a coin into the machine and viewed the "moving pictures" through a peephole. These machines were a sensation and soon were found throughout the country in drugstores, department stores, barrooms, at traveling shows and fairs.[3] A 1907 *Saturday Evening Post* account described these early locations, "Last year or the year before it was probably a second-hand clothier's, a pawn-shop or cigar store. Now, the counter has been ripped out, there is a ticket-seller's booth where the show window was, an automatic musical barker somewhere up in the air thunders its notice down on the passers-by, and the little store had been converted into a theatrelet."[4] On April 23, 1896, shorts were added to a vaudeville house line up; the Vitascope, an improvement on the Kinetoscope, was added at Koster and Bial's Music Hall, a vaudeville house in New York City. This forever changed vaudeville.[5]

At the same time movies were being introduced to established entertainment houses, the nickelodeon emerged as a venue for watching movies. At the nickelodeon, movies ran continuously from 8 AM to midnight. Early nickelodeons often possessed fewer than 100 seats and tended to be converted from storefronts and other non-theater buildings with gaudy and flamboyant adornments added to the front to advertise their use. On the interior, the nickelodeons often were utilitarian, unadorned spaces. Food was not allowed but vendors sold popcorn, peanuts and candy in the aisles. Pianos often provided musical accompaniment. Arriving around 1903, the nickelodeon was a permanent version of the converted store theater where shorts were displayed. By the end of their prominence, they could seat as many as 600 patrons. They included the gaudy lights and displays from the vaudeville theater tradition and the aggressive sales techniques of the traveling show.[6] Nickelodeons lasted about a decade, emerging overnight and disappearing equally fast with the emerging movie theaters which began being built during the 1910s.[7]

Although vaudeville did not initially consider film to be a threat to live entertainment, by the 1910s vaudeville houses were being converted into motion picture theaters. Vaudeville had become increasingly expensive to produce; movies were a cheaper form of mass entertainment. By the early 1930s, vaudeville was in its last days. The conversion of vaudeville theaters into movie houses established a precedent of lavishness and excess that would reach its apex in the grand architectural expression of the fantasy world of entertainment: the movie palace.

In the 1910s and 20s, movies evolved to narrative length. They were silent adventures or romances, overblown and not realistic, usually set in exotic locations. The movie house, which began being built for the purpose of showing films in 1909,[8] was similarly exotic and fantastic, an extension of the fantasy shown on the screen. Architects generally believed that the motion pictures would be accepted more easily if they were displayed in a building constructed in the established form of the day. Therefore, historical styles and accepted theater styles were employed. Architects stretched historic styles to their limits with overblown details as a draw to the audience;

[3] Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts at the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre, Starring S. Charles Lee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 16.
[4] Herzog, 26.
[5] Valentine, 17.
[6] Herzog, 28.
[7] Valentine, 27.
[8] Herzog, 18.

the building "was to lure the customers inside, to create an atmosphere of increasing respectability yet accessibility, and to be a part of the entertainment."[9] The experience and memory began before you entered the building. The façade was to stand out, be flamboyant and a destination in the streetscape. Movie theater construction, therefore, was the result of popular culture embellished with the trappings of highbrow cultures. By the mid-teens, movies had become a legitimate form of entertainment. In 1914, drama critic Victor Watson of the *New York Times* wrote about the opening night at the Strand, "If anyone had told me two years ago that the time would come when the finest-looking people in town would be going to the biggest and newest theatre on Broadway for the purpose of seeing motion pictures I would have sent them to visit…Bellevue Hospital."[10]

Emergence of the Movie Palace

The American movie theater developed as an architectural type over the first four decades of 20th century. From the nickelodeons of the turn of the century, theaters grew in size and lavishness during the 1910s. In the beginning, movie theaters were built by independent owners who often had chains of theaters. In the 1920s, movie production companies merged with theater chains creating the movie studio system which controlled every aspect of the movie industry from production to exhibition. Movie studios began to build new theaters which continued to grow in size and ornamentation and culminated in the movie palace. The movie palace, a special kind of big city movie theater built in America, emerged between 1913 and 1932 but especially in the 1920s. Their construction occurred simultaneously with the death of vaudeville, a post-World War I economic boom and tremendous growth in American cities which created a large market for entertainment.[11] According to the "The Big Theater List" published in 1991 in *Marquee: The Journal of the Theatre Historical Society of America*, 139 movie palaces, with seating of 2,800 or more, were built through 1932.[12] These palaces were built by a small group of businessmen—Marcus Loew of Loew's Inc., Benjamin Keith and Edward Albee of RKO Radio Pictures, William Fox of Fox Films and Balaban & Katz eventually of Paramount—all of whom started as small-time exhibitors who acquired movie studios and gradually emerged as entrepreneurs controlling hundreds of theaters each and the movies they showed.[13] Movie palaces emerged as a distinctive building type due to the efforts of a relatively small group of specialist designers which included Thomas Lamb, brothers C.W. and George Rapp and John Eberson. These designers were the pacesetters, collectively producing the prototypes, developing key functional innovations and experimenting with new decorative motifs. They led the process of competitive one-upmanship that shaped the field in which each innovation was quickly absorbed and adapted by other architects. Through the vast breadth of their work, they canonized the movie palace itself.[14]

The movie palace's gradual emergence as a distinct building type culminated in 1921 with Rapp and Rapp's completion of the Tivoli Theater in Chicago for Balaban & Katz. The Tivoli Theater in Chicago was, arguably,

[9] Valentine, 33.
[10] Ibid, 51-52.
[11] Ibid, 29.
[12] Jason Tippeconnic Fox, "Palaces on Main Street: Thomas W. Lamb, Rapp & Rapp, John Eberson and the Development of the Movie Palace," A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia, Department of Art and Architectural History (May 2014), 76.
[13] Matthew A. Postal and Anthony W. Robins, "Loew's Paradise Theater Interior," Landmarks Preservation Commission (May 16, 2006).
[14] Fox, 20.

the first fully realized movie palace, and the culmination of a progression of purpose-built, palatial motion picture theaters that endeavored to lend movies a certain respectability for the middle-classes. Built at a cost of $2,000,000, the Tivoli brought together the features developed in the previous decade and surpassed them: a bombastic façade, colossal interior spaces affording generous views, lavish decorative embellishments, and numerous novel functional solutions to enhance the audience's experience. While which theater can claim to the be the first movie palace is debatable, it is certain that the Tivoli eclipsed all prior motion picture theaters and set the standard against which everything in the coming decade was measured. The Tivoli's widespread influence vaulted Rapp and Rapp from a firm of regional significance to the status of the field's leader, eclipsing even the previous leader, Thomas Lamb.

The form of the Tivoli, like the preceding generation of motion picture theaters, was shaped by the need to broaden the appeal of movie going. The Tivoli was located at a busy commercial intersection of two streetcar lines and an elevated train and surrounded by neighborhoods. This enabled the theater to draw visitors who could arrive by public transportation but also appealed to the surrounding population. Balaban & Katz sought to establish a loyal middle-class audience. The Rapps endeavored to dispel the medium's working-class and ethnic associations using classical architectural motifs that were associated loosely with reputable institutions, such as banks, civic buildings, hotels, and railway stations. The use of an architectural language that equated with upstanding environments in theater was intended to give the motion picture medium respectability and to ensure proper decorum. Neighborhood movie houses were criticized throughout the 1910s as bastions of juvenile delinquency, sexual improprieties, and immigrant hooliganism. Movie palaces, including the Tivoli, aimed to dissociate such suspicious behavior from the motion picture industry. The classically inspired architecture of the Tivoli, as well as policing by ushers and management, helped ensure patrons were polite and well-mannered.[15]

With the Tivoli, the Rapp office found the definitive solution to a fundamental functional distinction between the movie palace and traditional theaters. With the theater, audiences arrived at their pre-booked show time and proceeded directly to their seats. At the movie palace, performances ran continuously throughout the day. Therefore, efficient circulation of incoming and outgoing crowds was a prime concern in movie-palace design. At the Tivoli, the Rapp's solution was two-fold. First, the lobby was vast, much larger than previous lobbies. Tivoli's immense grand lobby held 1,500 patrons awaiting admission into the 3,414 seats in the auditorium. Second, through ushered circulation routes, the Rapp's completely separated the incoming and outgoing crowds. From the auditorium, mezzanine and balcony, ushers guided outgoing people to a separate exit. Once the theater was clear, the ushers directed patrons to the auditorium or to a staircase up to the mezzanine and balcony.

The Tivoli was conceived as an attraction in its own right, an escapist environment. This experience began with a curving white terra cotta façade, large marquee and vertical sign. Rapp and Rapp designed the interior to control moviegoers' psychology. The immense lobby, the equivalent of six-stories in height, was designed after the Royal Chapel at Versailles. The vast and refined palatial environment made the interaction between differing social classes acceptable and encouraged polite behavior Chicago moviegoers had never seen anything like it; in fact, such a space was unprecedented in a motion picture theater. The large lot enabled the lobby to be a completely

[15] "Tivoli Theater," Jazz Age Chicago: Urban Leisure from 1893 to 1945, https://jazzagechicago.wordpress.com/tivoli/

separate space from the auditorium rather the usual arrangement of placing it beneath the balcony. The sides of the lobby were defined by four Corinthian columns, which rose from the mezzanine level to support the frescoed ceiling. Importantly, the Tivoli also had air conditioning, further ensuring escape from the Chicago heat.

In the auditorium, the Rapp office endeavored to create an intimate atmosphere, despite the space's vast size. To accomplish this, the proscenium was designed to appear large, and all other features were subdivided into smaller elements. For instance, the auditorium ceiling, which could have emphasized the auditorium's cavernous size, was broken into smaller units.[16]

Movie Palace Typology

These elements that defined the Tivoli became fundamental in movie palace design and established a building typology. The specialization of movie palace design was part of a larger trend during the interwar decades commensurate with other building types: department stores, factories, hotels, office buildings, and railroad stations, among others. The movie palace's key function was to draw patrons to the box office and away from the competition. Audiences craved something new in movie palace environments, and it was the task of architects to systematically deliver theaters that eclipsed everything audiences had seen elsewhere. This push to attract patrons combined with the programmatic requirements of the movie theater, coalesced into the character defining features that make movie palaces a distinctive building type. First, movie palaces were huge; they were built to accommodate thousands of people. Second, movie palaces had conspicuous exteriors with flashy marquees that distinguished and advertised them as a special building. Third, the lavish and fanciful decoration of the interior was a key component of their design. Fourth, programmatically, movie palaces had a well-planned circulation system enabling thousands of people to gather successfully including many stairs and hallways, commodious lobbies, foyers and lounges. These were filled with art, furnishings and other objects to distract and amuse the patrons. Fifth, movie palaces ran first class films but also included stage facilities for live shows and featured an in-house orchestra and a pipe organ. Finally, movie palaces had upscale amenities, appointments and services for their patrons—including ushers and doormen—to further ease and enhance the movie-going experience.

Movie palaces were for mass entertainment and were massive buildings that had to accommodate a large auditorium as well as a vast assortment of spaces under one roof. To be classified as a movie palace, some scholars contend they needed to accommodate at least 1,000 people.[17] But many of the palaces were far larger with seating for three times that number. To be successful, theaters were often built at locations that could encourage spontaneous ticket sales. This often meant a theater was built within close proximity to main transportation lines like at Journal Square. The priority was fitting the maximum number of seats on a given lot practically and economically. Construction often occurred on irregular lots that resulted in a cheaper price; this allowed more money to be spent on the décor of the movie palace. Loew's Jersey was constructed on an irregularly shaped lot on a steep cliff.

[16] Ibid; Fox, 131-135.
[17] Fox, 10.

The exterior of the movie palace was a crucial character defining feature of the building type. Its purpose was to sell tickets. To design such a façade, movie palace architects considered patron psychology, striving to imbue their exteriors with both a sense of theatricality reflecting the building's function and a spirit of romance to inspire the public to venture inside. Rapp and Rapp designer ECA Bullock recommended incorporating graceful curves to contrast with the straight commercial lines of the surrounding buildings[18]; the movie palace was designed to stand out as the most significant component of the block. Often, terra cotta was an essential design element. During the movie palace boom, terra cotta was cheap and adaptable making it perfect for this building type. Its ability to cheaply reference well-known older historic buildings gave the movie palace a stamp of exotic legitimacy. Terra cotta also was good for decorating large plain surfaces on buildings that contained no windows like movie theaters. It also helped distinguish the theater from the other buildings around it. While some movie palaces were an integral component of a mixed-use development of commercial and office spaces, others had attached commercial space and still others were stand alone, they all had to read primarily as a theater.

Another important feature of the exterior of the movie palace was the large and impressive marquee usually complemented by an oversized upright sign. Lighting was integrated into the overall design to attract patrons from blocks away.[19] In addition to attracting customers with its lights, the projecting marquee defined an exterior pocket of space that appeared to belong to the interior of the theater. When the passer-by and potential customer stepped within its imaginary boundary, he felt he was inside the building before he bought a ticket. Because while the exterior had to be elaborate and distinguishable from a distance, it also had to be compelling at the street level. The entrance was a crucial feature of the movie palace. ECA Bullock stated, "The theater entrance must be compelling, it must be inviting, and it must overshadow everything in its immediate neighborhood. Literally it must actually be a magnet and pull pedestrians and vehicles toward it."[20]

The ticket booth was a crucial component of the entrance of the movie palace. The ticket booth was an early movie house feature that had evolved from the ticket window of the traditional theater and the ticket booth and barker of the travelling circus and nickelodeon. An article in the 1913 *Motion Picture News* further confirms this, "The round ticket box on the sidewalk has been a fad like so many features in the motion picture show business. The exhibitor came to the conclusion that the round ticket box was as essential to the motion picture theatre as the mortar in front of the drug store or the striped pole in front of the barber shop. In other words, the round ticket box has been the emblem of the motion picture theatres."[21] At the movie palace, this emblem of movie theater was elaborated by ornamentation and according to Bullock, must be centrally located and as near the street as possible without obstructions or any other obstacles that could possibly deter potential patrons from buying a ticket.[22] Placed under the deep marquee at the movie palace, this icon of the movies was enhanced by thousands of lights and numerous photographic displays and posters. Completing this, the presence of a doorman and footman set the experience apart at the movie palace.

[18] E.C.A. Bullock, "The Theatre of To-day," *Motion Picture News* "Theatre Building and Equipment Buyers Guide" (21 November 1925), 32, https://archive.org/details/motionpicturenew00moti_10/page/32/mode/2up
[19] Ibid., 10-15.
[20] Ibid., 32.
[21] Herzog, 29.
[22] Ibid., 16.

In the movie palace, the interior was the opening act to the show on the stage and screen. According to Marcus Loew, "It didn't matter what movie was playing, you went for the theater itself…I don't sell tickets for shows; I sell tickets for theaters."[23] Movie palaces were designed to look like Parisian boudoirs, old Spanish towns, or Indian, Chinese, or Egyptian temple or historic places like Versailles or the Paris Opera. The style of the movie palace sold tickets and gave the theater an identity that could be advertised as unique, exotic and cultural. The exotic styles connoted fantasy and escape from the humdrum existence of daily life. In addition, the Americans returning from WWI recognized the architectural antecedents. "Exotic architecture of the 1920s and 1930s…reflected the new social freedoms of the period and the release from Victorian inhibitions."[24]

The vestibule and lobby were important for a good first impression and to maximize advertising of the product.[25] E.C.A. Bullock said the vestibule provided, "a generous and alluring glimpse into the interior" of the theater.[26] Within the auditorium, the grand architectural detail continued to reinforce the drama and luxury of the movie. All of the spaces had chandeliers and mirrors, niches, statuary, cartouches, murals and coffered ceilings. They were a veritable catalog of architectural details. In movie palace design, the architect employed the architecture of illusion to mimic what was occurring on the screen. Going to the movies became an event and the theater was as important as the show. The audience was admitted into an opulent setting previously reserved only for the wealthy. Movie palaces were accessible to all classes; they were equated with egalitarianism and democracy, expressed originally through appropriating European symbols of social status and class differentiation. Theaters became a part of the community, an asset that brought culture and luxury to all classes. Therefore, although these movie palaces were based on Old World historic buildings, they were American in spirit with the privileged elite sitting next to the working class.[27] Movie palaces were mass entertainment catered to all classes to fill its seats.

In 1929, movie palace architect John Eberson explained his design intent, "Here we find ourselves today creating and building super-cinemas of enormous capacities, excelling in splendor, in luxury and in furnishings the most palatial homes of princes and crowned kings for and on behalf of His Excellency—the American Citizen." His 1,845-seat Regent Theater in New York was modeled after the Doge's Palace in Venice, "an architectural landmark that educated Americans would recognize and that the less-educated would regard as classy." [28]

The elaborate interior of the movie palaces wasn't just ornamentation, it also served a function. Bullock described the purpose it served when he described the lobby as "a place where the waiting throng may be transformed from the usual pushing, complaining mob into a throng of happy and contented people…[It is] so designed and so equipped that the fascination resulting from it will keep the patron's minds off the fact that he is waiting."[29] The lobbies also were places to see and be seen, making the theater an important civic space.

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[23] Ted Conrad and Colin Egan, "Loew's Jersey a 'palace,' Not a Theater," *The Hudson Dispatch* (April 20, 1990), 15.
[24] Valentine, 185.
[25] Ibid., 30-31.
[26] Herzog, 16.
[27] http://loewsjersey.org/alt/discover-mainmenu-40/loews-jersey-history-mainmenu-48.html
[28] Valentine, 34.
[29] Bullock, 33.

Movie palaces always included a grand staircase with many secondary stairs. This added architectural drama but the grand stair also helped to slow people's entry. The secondary stairs assisted in circulating the thousands of patrons. Until the movie palace, there was a stigma to sitting in the balcony in American theaters because of the 19th century custom of reserving it for segregated groups: blacks, prostitutes and rowdies.[30] However, now the balcony beckoned with another luxurious lobby. Again, this was a luxury but also functional in dispersing crowds. "The function of the palace was to provide quality entertainment to as many people as possible at one time, as often as possible, and for the most reasonable price. To fulfill this function, the palace had to both attract the patron's attention while he was still outside the theater and satisfy his needs while inside."[31]

The movie palace wasn't just a movie house. Movie palaces offered live shows, dancers, vaudeville, organ recitals, orchestras, comedians, magicians. They had pipe organs. While these were originally there to accompany silent movies, they became a standard, and character defining, feature of the movie palace. The organ pipes provided another opportunity for architectural embellishment with fabrics and screens but were an expected amenity of the movie palace. In addition to the organ, the movie palace had an in-house orchestra. In many palaces, the orchestra pit and organs were mechanized, allowing them to rise above the audience for dramatic effect. All of this was offered for as little as twenty-five cents per ticket.

In addition to the movies and shows in the auditorium, the movie palaces had numerous appointments and auxiliary spaces like foyers, lounges, corridors and promenades, as well as extra services like usher and lobby entertainment and music. While these amenities were drawn from both traditional and vaudeville theaters, the old brashness of the movie theater's huckster days was not lost in the movie palace, but rather absorbed into a new pseudo-elegance.[32] The goal of the theater architect was to provide for "the absolute pleasure and comfort of the patrons" and the ultimate in utility and beauty."[33] Thus, another important feature of the movie palace was air conditioning which was invented in 1908 for use in hospitals. It was installed in movie theaters as early as 1921; a 1927 advertisement for the Tower Theater in New York read, "Leave Your Fan at Home! Manufactured Weather makes every day a good day at the Tower!"[34] As Bullock stated, the movie palace offered its patrons the chance to, "live for an hour or two in the land of make-believe."[35]

The period between 1927 and 1932 encompassed both the movie palace's pinnacle and its precipitous final decline. By the second half of the 1920s, Americans were increasingly accustomed to movie palaces, and the type settled into a standardized formula in terms of the architectural features, amenities, and overall experience that patrons could expect from theater to theater. While the type's continued proliferation, particularly into smaller cities and towns, remained a major focus for exhibitors and architects throughout the period, architectural variety and technological innovations emerged as the principal emphasis in movie palace development. During the late-1920s

[30] Ibid, 58-62.
[31] Ibid, 32.
[32] Herzog, 18-33.
[33] Valentine, 56.
[34] Ibid, 69.
[35] Bullock, 35.

movie-palace boom, it was no longer sufficient to simply build a new theater. Rather, each had to offer something different in order to eclipse those that preceded it locally or nationally. This demand led to the type's steady rise to a pinnacle of colossal size, more exotic or elaborate decoration, and ever more novel amenities for moviegoers' comfort and amusement through the end of the decade. But this one-upmanship also led to the demise of the movie palace. Especially with the Great Depression which resulted in a decline in movie going, movie palaces simply became too costly to build. By 1932, new movie palaces were no longer built.[36]

Let's Go to the Movies!

Movie attendance doubled during the 1920s from 40 to 80 million movie goers per week. By the end of the 1920s, movies theaters had invaded the existing traditional theater districts of urban centers throughout the country, successfully competing with live theaters to attract middle-class audiences.[37] With the emergence of the talkies in 1927, the movie palace no longer had to accommodate the mechanical needs of live entertainment. Sound and the increased sophistication of the films made live shows unnecessary and too costly. By the 1930s, therefore, the program generally focused exclusively on film. The movie palace which combined live shows and movies became outdated; the introduction of the talkies ultimately signaled the end of the movie palace. The transition came quickly. During the construction of Loew's 72nd Street Theatre in Brooklyn in 1932, plans were altered to eliminate the orchestra pit and the organ was never installed. Radio City Music Hall, also constructed in 1932, is considered to be the last great movie palace that incorporated the needs of live entertainment; located in the heart of New York City, it was still considered a wise financial investment.

By the end of the 1930s, movie theater design had completely changed. The new theaters of the 1930s were pared down because of the economy but also because movie going was now socially acceptable, so it no longer needed an architectural defense. In addition, the program and film became more important than the theater. "It should be a comfortable and attractive auditorium, but not lavish in appointment. Good acoustics are more important than costly interior enrichment.[38] By 1937, Rapp and Rapp were still designing theaters but rather than the over-the-top use of ornamentation, their interiors were simple, streamlined and smaller with only 1500 seats. They advocated for:

> simple decorative motifs and restrained use of color...to disturb him [the moviegoer] as little as possible by decorative ornamentations…Less than a decade ago, showmanship in theater design was sought in costly elegance, the use of expensive decorative materials in lavish designs to suggest impressive richness. The effectiveness of these practices has never been denied, but the pressure of current economies has so universally curtailed the cost of new theater construction that an entirely new trend in design has become necessary.[39]

In the 1920s, the theater was as important as the movie. By the 1930s, the movies reigned supreme.[40]

[36] Fox, 159.
[37] Ibid, 51.
[38] Mason G. Rapp, "Warner Brothers' Rhodes Theater," *Architectural Concrete*, Volume 4, Number 1 (1938), 9.
[39] George L. Rapp, "B. & K.'s Will Rogers Theater: The Architectural Design," *Architectural Concrete*, Volume 2, Number 4 (1936), 3.
[40] Gordon Craig, "Amusement—and its Setting" *The Architectural Review*, Volume LXIX, Number 411 (February 1931), 63.

In 1930, the major studios owned or controlled 13% of the nation's theaters but took in 70% of the box office receipts. This enabled them to be able to afford to subsidize the running and maintenance of the enormous movie palaces. With the Great Depression, though, theater attendance declined. In 1930, weekly attendance was 90 million. By 1932, the number dropped to 60 million. During this time, many movie theaters had to close. In 1930, there were 22,000 in operation; by 1932, that number was just over 14,000. To keep people coming to the movies, theater managers tried a variety of giveaways. One such gimmick, "Dish Night," presented a dish to every patron. Each week a different dish was offered. By going to movies each week, patrons could obtain a full set of dishes.

During the Depression, the concession stand was introduced to movie houses. Prior to this, it was considered unsanitary to bring food into the theater. Food was also prohibited to protect the expensive interior furnishings. However, during the Depression, the sale of popcorn and candy was considered an affordable amenity. The concession stand became an important centerpiece of the lobby.

During the 1930s, many theaters were renovated. Often this went beyond the introduction of the concession stand. Neon was introduced and continued to replace incandescent lighting through the 1950s. In the movie palace, this often led to the removal of the chandeliers. The marquees were often updated at this time as well. During the 1910s and 20s, the marquees were usually dark and delicately detailed. With the onset of automobile traffic, the size and shape of the marquee had to change. It needed to project more from the façade and contain larger graphics to be easily read from a moving car.[41] Neon was also added to the marquee to further dramatize it; it became a distant tower, outlined in neon, announcing the theater.

The heyday for the movie theater was the 1940s; those movie palaces that had withstood the Depression also thrived. Between 1941 and 1945, theater attendance averaged 85 million per week, compared to 69 million in the early 1930s. Movies were a part of everyday life for the American public. They were inexpensive entertainment and a way to escape the realities of World War II. However, at the end of the 1940s, two factors led to their decline: the breakup of the theater-production monopoly and the invention of television.

In 1948, the Supreme Court ruled that the five major studios (Paramount, RKO, Loew's, Twentieth Century-Fox and Warner Bros.) constituted an illegal trust because they controlled all aspects of the movies: production, distribution and exhibition. To break up this monopoly, the studios divested themselves of their theaters resulting in theater ownership by independent owners. This proved expensive, as the theaters now had to absorb the costs of leasing movies, advertising and maintaining lavish theaters. Movie ticket costs increased. This occurred at the same time as the rise of television and proved to be the end for many movie theaters and palaces. In 1949, attendance dropped by 20 million a week, the following year, another 10 million. By 1953, theater attendance was down to 45.9 million a week a drop of nearly 50% from its peak of 90 million per week in 1946-1948.[42]

[41] Valentine, 97-103.
[42] Ibid, 130-164.

During the 1950s, in hopes of winning back audiences, novelties were introduced to the movies. These included 3-D and other new technologies. Many existing theaters were changed, especially around the screens, to accommodate the new technologies. In addition, during the 1960s and 70s many theaters started to break large theaters up into smaller units with the "multiplexification" of movie houses. The belief was that a variety of shows and times would increase the audience. Instead, what happened was the business itself changed. While attendance dropped, 22% between 1948-1949, concession sales increased more than eight times. By 1956, attendance was half of what it had been in 1948 but concession sales had increased more than forty times. The movie theater business became the candy business. In 1951, concession stands represented 20% of the revenue; by 1989, it accounted for 80%.[43]

Through the 1960s and 70s, many historic movie houses, especially the movie palaces, were closed and many demolished. At a website which documents historic movie theaters all over the world (cinematreasures.org), there are almost 30,000 theaters recorded. Of these, almost 11,000 have closed and another 10,000 have been demolished. Today, the historic theaters that survived were usually saved by a group of dedicated volunteers and if they still operate as a movie theater, tend to be art houses that show independent and foreign films.

Loew's Inc.

Loew's Inc., founded by Marcus Loew early in the 20th century, became the premiere movie theater chain in the Northeast, and one of the country's largest, with theaters throughout the nation, and, eventually, around the world. Marcus Loew (1870-1927) was the son of Jewish immigrants from Austria. He grew up on New York's Lower East Side. His father was a restaurant waiter. Loew began selling newspapers at age six, dropped out of school at nine and was a furrier by age twelve. With his friend Adolf Zukor and rising young actor David Warfield, Loew moved into the business of penny arcades in 1904, and opened his own arcade in 1905 in New York which he converted to a nickelodeon. In 1908, Loew converted a burlesque house in downtown Brooklyn into a vaudeville and film theater. He took over the management of two Manhattan theaters soon after and ran them with a similar policy of showing vaudeville and film. In 1910, with Zukor and the brothers Nicholas and Joseph Schenck as partners, and with the Shubert brothers—theatrical managers and producers—as investors, he formed Loew's Consolidated Enterprises, and opened the National Theater in the Bronx as the company "flagship." In 1911, he purchased the William Morris circuit of vaudeville theaters and reorganized the company as Loew's Theatrical Enterprises. By 1919, Loew had film and vaudeville theaters in Atlanta, Boston, Memphis, Baltimore, New Orleans, Birmingham, Montreal, and Hamilton, Ontario, in Canada. Expanding his holdings with new acquisitions in Cleveland and along the West Coast, he formed Loew's, Inc.

In 1920, Loew acquired his own production company, Metro Pictures Corporation, which was combination of Metro (est. 1916) and Goldwyn (est. 1917) Pictures. In 1924, Loew merged his Metro-Goldwyn production company with Louis B. Mayer Pictures (est. 1918) forming Metro-Goldwyn Mayer Pictures Corporation, or M-G-M.[44] By 1925, with the release of *Ben Hur*, M-G-M had become one of the nation's premier movie production

[43] Ibid, 171-172.
[44] Foundations of the Prolific Film Industry, The History of Film, https://www.filmsite.org/20sintro.html

companies. Loew's Inc. remained its parent company. Loew, however, continued to concentrate on expanding his movie theater chain. In 1924 he had 100 houses under his control and by 1927 the number had grown to 144. In 1925, Loew's former partner Zukor helped arrange the merger of his Famous Players-Lasky company with the giant Chicago movie palace empire of Balaban & Katz, with 500 theaters under its control. The new company, renamed Paramount-Publix, began constructing theaters in New York. The competition apparently worried Loew, because he reached an accord with Zukor. Because of this agreement, Loew's built no theaters in Chicago and Paramount built only two theaters in New York City: The Paramount in Times Square (demolished) and the Brooklyn Paramount (1928, altered, now a gymnasium). Loew's, Inc. remained the premier power in New York. According to a contemporary account in *Motion Picture World*, "The supply of movies is assured and standardized. The vaudeville acts are routed uniformly, the strength of each is known and the proper balance of a bill is fixed. The public knows what it will get for its money, week after week. Thus, the Loew line is held."

At the height of his success, Marcus Loew became ill and died in 1927. He was succeeded as president of Loew's, Inc. by his partner Nicholas Schenck, who remained with the company until his retirement in 1957. It was Schenck who oversaw Loew's move into sound pictures, and Schenck was in command when Loew's built, among others, the Loew's Jersey.[45]

The Wonder Theatres

In the mid-1920s, Paramount Pictures Corporation conceived the idea of building four movie palaces in what was seen as the largely untapped markets of the outlying boroughs of New York City. As a result of the 1925 agreement that kept Paramount from building more theaters in New York and Loew's from entering the Chicago market, the four Paramount theater-projects were sold to Loew's. The architecture firms who designed the theaters were part of the deal and oversaw the construction of the four palaces at the end of the 1920s. Loew's opened them in quick succession in 1929 and 1930. The Valencia in Queens was the first to be completed; it opened January 12, 1929. This was quickly followed by the Paradise in the Bronx which opened September 7, 1929. Both were designed by John Eberson, a Paramount architect famous for his atmospheric theater designs. The Kings in Brooklyn opened on the same day as the Bronx Paradise, September 7, 1929. Loew's Jersey followed and opened on September 28, 1929. In the initial study, this last theater was slated for Staten Island but demographic research indicated that the borough did not contain a high enough population density to accommodate such a large theater. Instead, it came to Jersey City. The Kings and the Jersey were both designed by George and C.W. Rapp, well-known monumental movie palace designers who also had worked for Paramount on numerous other projects. In addition to the theaters conceived by Paramount for the outlying boroughs, Loew's added a fifth theater in Manhattan. Designed by Thomas Lamb, the company's favorite architect, Loew's 175th Street opened in February 1930.

Each of these theaters included a Morton "Wonder" organ, apparently the origin of the name "Wonder Theatres" that has since been applied collectively to the five houses. The "Wonder Theatres," all of which survive in varying states of repair, were among the most lavish movie palaces ever built in the New York metropolitan area. In

[45] Postal and Robins; "Gilt Complex: Volunteers Work to Restore Lost Splendor of a Landmark Theater," *The Star-Ledger (*September 11, 1996), 35.

addition to sumptuous décor and Morton organs, all five theaters also had the same marquee in the shape of Napoleon's hat, called a French marquee, providing a third unifying feature of these Loew's palaces. [46]

Rapp and Rapp

Loew's Jersey Theatre was designed by the Chicago-based architectural firm of Rapp and Rapp which designed over 400 theaters between 1917 and 1935 across the country. Along with Thomas Lamb and John Eberson, they were the most important and influential theater designers of the period.

Brothers Cornelius Ward "C.W." Rapp (1861-1926) and George Leslie Rapp (1878-1941), founders of C.W. & Geo. L. Rapp, Architects ("Rapp and Rapp"), were natives of Carbondale, Illinois and the youngest sons of a large family of architects born to Isaac Rapp (1830-1913) of Orange, New Jersey and Georgiana Shaw (d. 1912), a native of the British Isle of Jersey. Isaac Rapp was an architect-builder; he was raised in New York where he was apprenticed to a house joiner and possibly an architect for a period of four years. In 1855, he left New York for new opportunities in Carbondale, 300 miles south of Chicago. Founded in 1852, Carbondale was one of a several new towns established along the recently chartered Illinois Central Railroad. In 1856, Georgiana and the growing number of Rapp children joined Isaac in Carbondale.

Isaac Rapp became Carbondale's leading architect-builder. His buildings were central to Carbondale's development. His eastern training in the building trades set him apart from his local competitors, leading to commissions to design or construct many of the town's earliest buildings. Isaac and Georgiana's family included nine children: Harriet Cornelius, Isaac Hamilton (1854-1933), William Morris (1865-1920), Alfred, Annie Augusta, Louis B. (d.1910), Charles R., Cornelius Ward, and George Leslie. Five of the seven Rapp brothers ultimately became architects, including: Isaac Hamilton, William Morris, Louis B., Cornelius Ward, and George Leslie. The three eldest established their careers in Trinidad, Colorado when in 1892, Isaac Hamilton Rapp and William Morris Rapp formed I.H. & W.M. Rapp (variously also known as Rapp & Rapp or Rapp, Rapp & Hendrickson), where Louis B. Rapp was employed as a draftsman. The firm specialized in the design of public buildings, completing projects in southern Colorado and throughout New Mexico in a variety of contemporary modes and styles. However, the firm is best known for canonizing the Spanish Pueblo Revival as the regional architectural expression. The "Santa Fe style owes it origin principally to the construction of the Museum of Fine Arts on the Santa Fe Plaza," designed by Isaac Hamilton Rapp in 1917. [47] Within the next generation, Mason G. Rapp, the son of William, also became an architect as did his cousin Daniel Brush. They took over the Chicago Rapp and Rapp firm and ran it until 1965. Mason Rapp's son, Charles Ward Rapp, wrote a book about the family and its three-generations of architects.[48]

C.W. Rapp, like his three older architect-brothers, received his architectural training through an apprenticeship with his father. In 1889, he entered a partnership with architect C.P. Thomas to form the Chicago-based firm

[46] "Save This Theater: A Jersey Behemoth in Balance," *New York Post* (July 27, 1992), 19; Postal, "Loew's Paradise Theater Interior;" "Gilt Complex.

[47] Paul Gleye, "Santa Fe Without Adobe: Lessons for the Identity of Place," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, Volume 3, Number 4 (Autumn, 1994), 184-185.

[48] "Viburnum Press Publishes Rapp & Rapp History" Cision, PRWeb, https://www.prweb.com/releases/2014/07/prweb12023936.htm

Thomas & Rapp. Thomas specialized in residential design; Thomas & Rapp maintained this specialty. Between 1890 and 1895, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* recorded 26 of the firm's commissions, of which 19 were residential including apartments and single-family residences. But they also designed theaters and music halls. In 1889, they designed a theater in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. In 1894, Thomas & Rapp designed the Oakland Music Hall in Chicago, a four-story building with a 1,000-seat hall for dances, entertainments, and receptions on the top two floors, complete with a stage, dressing rooms, and other amenities for theatrical performances. The following year, they designed the Thornton Hall Block in Englewood, Illinois, a six-story building with a third-floor dance hall, banquet hall, and Masonic lodge. Thomas & Rapp was dissolved by January 1901, after which Rapp established his own independent practice. C.W. Rapp was appointed state architect for Illinois from 1893 to 1897. In this capacity, Rapp designed Altgeld Hall (1896) at Southern Illinois Normal University, providing science classrooms, a library, and a gymnasium. A second commission at the university followed. In 1903, he designed the Wheeler Library, which also housed a museum, biological laboratory, and a YMCA/YWCA.[49]

George Rapp, the youngest Rapp son, obtained a B.S. in 1899 from the University of Illinois. The architecture program at Illinois had been established in 1873 by Nathan Ricker. Ricker modeled his programs on German architectural education with an emphasis on construction, technology and the use of modern materials. Unlike the other architecture programs in the U.S. which emphasized classicism and the École des Beaux Arts-based curriculum, Ricker's University of Illinois program emphasized the science of construction rather than the cultivation of taste. Ricker complimented design instruction with shop practice, in which students were urged to acquire skills in the use of materials by constructing scale models of building components. A central principle of the program was past forms could be developed, perfected, and adapted for modern use through knowledge of structure and the nature of new materials. This process would be a perfection of history, producing what Ricker deemed a living architecture.[50]

In 1899 following his graduation and a tour of Europe, George Rapp joined the Chicago office of Edmund Krause, a German born and trained architect. Rapp gained his experience in theater design under Krause: a vaudeville theater in 1901 and the 1906 Majestic Building and Theater in Chicago, the tallest building in the city when it was built with a theater on the ground floor. The Majestic instantly became one of Chicago's most popular vaudeville theater.[51]

In 1906, C.W. Rapp and George Rapp formed C.W. & Geo. L. Rapp, Architects. Based in Chicago, the firm specialized in the design of vaudeville and motion picture theaters from the outset. C.W. took a leading design role and George Rapp a leading role in sales. They found immediate success, obtaining commissions for vaudeville theaters based upon George Rapp's association with the Chicago Majestic. The firm became associated with several regional Orpheum affiliates, notably the Allardt Brothers circuit and the Western Vaudeville Association, both operating in the Midwest and Canada.

[49] Fox, 30; "Thomas, Cyrus Pole," Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada 1800-1950, http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1354
[50] Fox, 88-89; Wayne Michael Charney and John W. Stamper, "Nathan Clifford Ricker and the Beginning of Architectural Education in Illinois," *Illinois Historical Journal*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (Winter, 1986), 257-266.
[51] Fox, 89-90; "The Majestic Theater," Chicagology, https://chicagology.com/skyscrapers/skyscrapers064/

The Majestic Theater in Des Moines, Iowa was a key early commission for Rapp and Rapp. Designed in 1907 as a "sister theater" to the Chicago Majestic, the firm developed several key architectural elements that would characterize their movie palaces: a monumental façade, French Renaissance motifs, and numerous lavishly-appointed support spaces for audience comfort. Most importantly, the building was fireproof and employed a hanging balcony that eliminated obtrusive support posts in the 1,700-seat auditorium. This became a standard solution that the firm adopted and adapted throughout the Midwest. Representative theaters include the Majestic in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1908, the Majestic in Dubuque, Iowa in 1910 and the Orpheum in Madison, Wisconsin in 1911.

In 1912, C.W. married Mary Payne Root and the newlyweds embarked on a Parisian honeymoon. While the emergence of French motifs in the Rapp's theatrical designs dated from the outset of their practice, C.W.'s firsthand exposure cemented the firm's preference for palatial interiors derived from French architectural patrimony. C.W. especially became fascinated with the Opéra in Paris and the Royal Theatre at Versailles. Variations of their features, especially the Opera's grand staircase, would be incorporated into the firm's theatrical designs. The design of the 1915 Al. Ringling Memorial Theater in Baraboo, Wisconsin was a direct result of this trip. The project's budget allowed the firm to fully indulge in its increasingly palatial aesthetic sensibilities for the first time. The Neobaroque theater introduced curves and graceful arches to the straight commercial lines of Baraboo's downtown architecture.[52]

Following their visit to Al. Ringling Memorial Theater in Baraboo, brothers A.J. and Barney Balaban and Sam Katz—founders of Balaban & Katz, a Chicago-based movie theater developer—retained Rapp and Rapp to design the new chain's ambitious scheme of large, palatial motion picture theaters in and around Chicago. These included the 1917 Central Park in North Lawndale, the 1918 Riviera in the Uptown neighborhood on the city's North Side and the Chicago, built in 1921, in the Loop. This culminated in the 1921 Tivoli Theater in the Woodlawn neighborhood of Chicago's South Side which became the definitive model of the movie palace.

The firm continued to design theaters for Balaban & Katz including the 1920 Capitol in St. Paul, Minnesota and the 1921 Lindo in Freeport, Illinois. This was followed by a second group of Chicago movie palaces: the 1925 Uptown in the Uptown neighborhood, the 1926 Norshore in the North Side Rogers Park neighborhood, and the 1926 Oriental in the Loop.[53]

Following their work with Balaban & Katz, other regional movie theater companies commissioned the firm to design similar movie palaces. The Saxe Brothers of Milwaukee, for example, commissioned a succession of movie palaces into the late 1920s throughout Wisconsin. Rapp and Rapp also continued to design vaudeville theaters

[52] Ibid, 100-103; Valentine, 40.
[53] Fox, 100; "Al. Ringling Theater," Cinema Treasures, http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/351; "Balaban & Katz" Encyclopedia of Chicago, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/103.html; "Chicago Theatre Center" Chicago Architecture Center, https://www.architecture.org/learn/resources/buildings-of-chicago/building/chicago-theatre/

which were smaller and more sedate examples of the movie palace form but which shared their palatial appointments.[54]

By the late 1920s, Rapp and Rapp had commissions across the U.S. Paramount-Publix emerged as the Rapps' most significant client, and the firm functioned as its de-facto in-house architect much as it had for Balaban & Katz earlier in the decade, likely due to Sam Katz's control of Publix Theaters. This relationship gained the firm a steady stream of prestigious commissions, including the company's headquarters and flagship theater on Times Square in 1926. Other Paramount theaters were completed in Denver in 1927, Seattle and Portland in 1928 and Brooklyn and Toledo in 1929. Loew's also turned to Rapp and Rapp which culminated in two "Wonder Theaters:" the Loew's Kings and the Loew's Jersey, both in 1929.

C.W. Rapp did not live to see his firm's pinnacle, dying suddenly at the age of 65 in 1926 in his Chicago home from a cerebral hemorrhage. During the Great Depression which halted movie palace construction, Rapp and Rapp kept its doors open with a handful of non-theatrical commissions, including designs for facilities at the 1933 Century of Progress exposition in Chicago, and through theater renovation projects. They designed a few more theaters in the second half of the 1930s in Chicago; their last was the Warner Bros. Rhodes, built in 1937. George Rapp retired in 1938, dying in 1941 from a stroke-induced fall. Nephews Mason Rapp and Daniel Brush and longtime office member Charles McCarthy reformed the firm as Rapp & Rapp, Architects who were in business until 1965. Their final theater commission was the Fisher Theater built in Detroit in 1961. Rapp & Rapp were hired to renovate an existing movie theater into a traditional live theater. This renovation is credited with keeping the building alive; it is still in use today.[55]

Rapp and Rapp were known for brilliant practical planning, clever design, and a wealth of elaborate decorative detail. They referenced historic interiors but introduced modern amenities to these structures, making them destinations in themselves. If they lacked historical accuracy, in opulence they were seldom matched; Rapp and Rapp went for the grand gesture. "Rapp and Rapp put one idea above all others: eye-bugging opulence…their stock in trade was a grandeur that spelled m*o*n*e*y to the dazzled two-bit ticket holder." [56]

George Rapp stated the firm's design philosophy:

> Watch the eyes of a child as it enters the portals of our great theatres and treads the pathway into fairyland. Watch the bright light in the eyes of the tired shopgirl who hurries noiselessly over carpets and sighs with satisfaction as she walks amid furnishings that once delighted the hearts of queens. See the toil-worn father whose dreams have never come true, and look inside his heart as he finds strength and rest within the theatre. There you have the answer to why motion picture theatres are so palatial. Here is a shrine to democracy where there are no privileged patrons. The wealthy rub elbows with the poor -- and are better for this contact. Do not wonder, then, at the touches of Italian Renaissance,

[54] Fox, 100-103.
[55] Fox, 293-297; Dan Austin, "The Fisher Building," HistoricDetroit.org, https://historicdetroit.org/buildings/fisher-building
[56] Chris Stangl, "Know Your Movie Palace: the Englert Theatre, Iowa City," The Exploding Kinetoscope: Writing on Film (April 25, 2007), http://explodingkinetoscope.blogspot.com/2007/04/know-your-movie-palaces-englert-theater_25.html

> executed in glazed polychrome terra cotta, or at the lobbies and foyers adorned with replicas of precious masterpieces of another world, or at the imported marble wainscoting or the richly ornamented ceilings with motifs copied from master touches of Germany, France, and Italy, or at the carved niches, the cloistered arcades, the depthless mirrors, and the great sweeping staircases. These are not impractical attempts at showing off. These are part of a celestial city -- cavern of many-colored jewels, where iridescent lights and luxurious fittings heighten the expectations of pleasure. It is richness unabashed, but richness with a reason.[57]

Loew's Jersey

Rapp & Rapp's Loew's Jersey was begun in 1928; opening night was on September 28, 1929. The Loew's Jersey was the third and last theater to be built at Journal Square. The 2,169-seat State Theater, opened in 1922, was classically derived with a Greek-temple inspired exterior and a refined Adamesque interior. The Stanley Theatre, opened in 1928, had 4,332 seats and was an Atmospheric style movie palace. The Loew's Jersey had to outdo both of them. Built for $2 million, the Loew's was accurately called as "the most lavish temple of entertainment in New Jersey." (Historic Photos 2-18) With seating of 3,100, it was also one of the biggest. Its construction was considered a real boon for Journal Square because it was thought that it would increase real estate values, improve the architecture of the Square and bring significant shows to Jersey City. "The motion picture theatre has come to be one of the most important factors in the life of a community…A theatre so majestic as this exerts a stronger influence in the appreciation of beauty than a monument or a museum. It attracts a constant flow of attendance, where as a work of art, maybe passed by unnoticed by the general mass."[58]

On opening day, the doors opened at 11:00 to a full house. It was the fourth "Wonder Theater" opened by Loew's and so there was significant press and excitement about its opening. The program for opening night included the movie "Madame X", directed by Lionel Barrymore who received an Academy Award nomination and starring actor Ruth Chatterton who received a Best Actress nomination. The master of ceremonies was Ben Black and his Rhythm Kings. Other performers included: Don Albert and his grand orchestra, Leo Weber and his "singing school," the twenty member Chester Hale Girls, comedians Ritz Brothers "with their collegiate twang," Stone Vernon four adagio dancers, a Russian tap dancer Karavieff and soloist Aileen Clarke. Most of these performers came from the Capitol Theatre in New York. The night was dubbed "a glittering and golden panorama of entertainment" which brought Broadway to Journal Square.[59] (Historic Photo 19)

The amenities of the theater were highly praised. There was the "grandeur of the interior" [60] with its Baroque detailing. The oval shaped lobby in "shades of gray, gold, pale blue and rose, jade green colonnades with Roman bronze bases filled the end." The bronze and crystal chandelier contained ten tiers of light; the crystal from

[57] Andrew Craig Morrison, *Theaters* (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 2006), 26.
[58] "The Opening of Loew's Jersey City Theatre Marks Another Achievement for Journal Square," *Jersey City Magazine*, Volume XIV, Number 9 (September 1929), 14.
[59] "Row G, Two Seats on the Aisle: Mirth and Music, Youth and Beauty Mark Initial Stage Show at Loew's," *Jersey Journal* (September 30, 1929), 15.
[60] Ibid.

Czechoslovakia cost $60,000. There was artwork and sculpture, bronze statues and paintings brought from Europe.[61] The music room where musicians played before the shows began was decorated with pottery and bronze statues from the former Vanderbilt home on Fifth Avenue in New York City.[62] Added to this was the $100,000 Robert Morgan organ within the auditorium and the obliging ushers and executives. There were goldfish in the fountain pool at the mezzanine. [63] There were lines all day. [64]

Like their design for the Tivoli in Chicago, Rapp and Rapp used curving terra cotta, a bold marquee and dazzling lighting and entrance to draw audiences. The Loew's Jersey lobby was an enormous separate space that like the Tivoli soared with a colonnade anchoring an open mezzanine capped by an ornate and dazzling ceiling. The extravagance of the décor was breathtaking. The auditorium, another explosion of architectural and decorative features, was similarly broken up by different planes in the ceilings and the walls to give the cavernous space a sense of intimacy like the Tivoli. The various lobbies, lounges and amenities also mimicked the Tivoli, enabling crowds to be engaged while they flowed through the spaces.

However, Rapp and Rapp also improved on their Tivoli design at Loew's Jersey, especially at the stage. The Loew's was one of the best equipped theaters of its day. Its rigging was an arbor and metal cable counterweight rigging system in its 80 foot high rigging loft, standard for Broadway theaters. The stage lighting equipment was state of the art for 1929. The theater's stage was large for its day, measuring an average 35 feet deep by 82 feet wide. Sections of the stage could be raised for dramatic affect. The proscenium opening, was greatly enlarged from previous designs; it was an amazingly wide 50 feet. The orchestra pit, which was incorporated into stage at the Tivoli, was separate and included a main elevator plus a second one dedicated exclusively to the organ; overall, it was large enough for 40 musicians. The Loew's backstage area included ten dressing rooms and a large rehearsal space. And of course, there was the projection booth, originally equipped with VitaPhone sound-on-disk projectors—the first commercially successful "talking picture" equipment.[65] In mechanical equipment, the Loew's also was technically advanced and fully automated. "Electrical effects for ten stage acts could be set in advance to eliminate last-minute confusion."[66] The Loew's also had air conditioning. A trip to Loew's was, "equal to a trip to the mountains, sea, or country" because of the air conditioning which, "scientifically washed and treated the air distributed throughout the theater palace, systematically replacing the air faster than it was used in breathing."[67]

The advancements at Loew's Jersey were due to Rapp and Rapp's innovations and a honing of their craft, but also due to changes in movie technology. The Loew's Jersey was one of the first talking picture palaces in New Jersey. According to Nicholas Schenk, the president of Loew's, Loew's Jersey was designed in the age of silent pictures.

[61] "40th Year this Month."
[62] Blanca Monica Quintanilla, "Group Fights on to Save the Loew's" *Jersey Journal* (October 24, 1984).
[63] "Gilt Complex: Volunteers Work to Restore Lost Splendor of a Landmark Theater," *The Star-Ledger (*September 11, 1996), 35.
[64] "Row G."
[65] http://loewsjersey.org/alt/discover-mainmenu-40/loews-jersey-history-mainmenu-48.html
[66] "Loew's Jersey City to Mark 40th Year this Month," *Jersey Journal* (September 12, 1969); Vertical File, Theater, Loew's, Jersey City Free Public Library.
[67] "40th Year this Month."

However, during the construction of the theater in 1928 as talking pictures became possible, the design was changed. Schenk said the texture of the walls and ceilings was specifically prepared by Loew's engineers to reflect sound to the farthest reaches of the house and was the one of the first theaters designed specifically for talking pictures. "The wall textures and ceilings were a secret mixture, compounded by engineers after exhaustive lab testing to give a uniform frequency of sound vibration. All carvings and decoration served a voice-deflecting as well as decorative purpose."[68]

Loew's Jersey, 1929-1986

From its opening in 1929, Loew's Jersey was an important part of life in Jersey City. In October 1930, there was a first birthday celebration for the Loew's. Mayor Hague had the honor of cutting the large cake on Loew's stage. As on opening night, the film was supplemented by the stage revue from New York's Capitol Theatre plus additional entertainers.[69] Through the mid-1930s, the Loew's Jersey continued to play a combination of live stage shows and first–run movies (Historic Photos 20 and 21). The live shows appear to have been more dance reviews rather than traditional vaudeville shows.[70] The programs for the first quarter of 1933 are typical for the Loew's during this period: Bob Hope on January 27; Bing Crosby on March 3; Bill "Bojangles" Robinson on March 17; and Milton Berle on April 21.[71] According to their daughter's biography, Frank Sinatra brought Jersey City's Nancy Barbato to the Loew's for their first date in March 1933 to see Bing Crosby. That night at Loew's, Sinatra decided to become a singer. He and Nancy later married.[72] In 1936, speaking to the immense popularity of the Loew's Jersey, a woman threatened to sue because she fell over a patron while walking in the aisle. The patron had been allowed to sit in the aisle. Apparently, 3,100 seats were not enough; there was an overflow crowd.[73]

In addition, to the movies and live shows, the Loew's Jersey held civic functions like beauty and talent contests and graduations. A typical event occurred in 1936 when there was a community contest for best essay "Why I Want a Dog." Held in conjunction with the movie, *The Voice of Bugle Ann*, the contest was judged by the radio editor of the *Jersey Journal*; the winner received a puppy.[74] Through 1945, every Sunday morning, the Loew's held a free symphony concert.[75] In 1939, the Loew's Jersey, an MGM movie house, was the location of the New Jersey premier of *Gone with the Wind*, one of the top ticket selling movies of all times. It is considered the first true Hollywood blockbusters and at three hours and forty minutes, was the longest sound film produced at the time. The Loew's Jersey was packed with audiences for weeks.

For a decade or so after its completion the house provided feature motion pictures, vaudeville and stage shows, many imported from the Capitol Theater on Broadway. The Ritz Brothers comedy team, which appeared at the

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[68] Ibid.
[69] "Loew's Jersey City Plans First Birthday," *Hudson Dispatch* (Monday, October 13, 1930); "Cutting Loew's First Birthday Cake," *Hudson Dispatch* (Wednesday October 22, 1930).
[70] Conrad and Egan.
[71] Leonard Greene, "Monument to a Bygone Era," *Jersey Journal* (August 22, 1986).
[72] "40th Year this Month."
[73] "Woman is Suing Loew's Over Fall," *Jersey Journal* (Friday, November 20, 1936), 9.
74 "Loew's Offers Puppies Free," *Jersey Journal* (March 10, 1936).
[75] "G. Dumond Quits Post at Loew's: Kolpeck to Take Over Management, *Jersey Journal* (December 3, 1945), 15.

1929 opening, was the first of many headliners to appear on the stage. In April 1935, "new musical extravaganza Folies Bergere," was featured.[76] The extravaganzas were mostly discontinued by World War II; they were too costly. But the theater continued to attract a million or more patrons annually for many years with organists, especially the popular and locally well-known Ted Meyn, providing the live entertainment. Radio broadcasts, beauty and talent contests and civic gatherings were frequent. During World War II, Loew's Jersey was active in the war efforts, selling war bonds to patrons (Historic Photos 22-25). It was a radio sponsor (Historic Photo 28). It celebrated its 25th birthday (Historic Photo 29). The theater continued to be a destination and locals' place, uninterrupted for fifty years with only minor mishaps and changes. For instance, at the end of December 1938, there was a fire in the theater at the third floor where lobby display materials were stored. It caused little damage but significant excitement in Journal Square.[77]

At some point, likely during the early 1930s as was happening all over the country, a concession stand was added to the Loew's Jersey. Previously, the neighboring soda foundation provided necessary refreshments. However, when the profitability of concessions was realized, a stand was constructed. No evidence of this stand or other later incarnations remain today. Similarly, at some point in the early life of the building, the original compressors for the air conditioning system stopped working and new ones were installed. Too large to be removed, they were dropped intact into the sub-basement. They still exist today and their pristine condition affirms that they were not in use long.

In 1945, the original theater manager, George H. Dumond, retired and was succeeded by James J. Kolpeck. [78] Architectural changes to the building may have followed this change in leadership. With the end of live shows, the pipe organ and orchestra pit were covered up in 1949 and seats added over them. Also, in 1949, in an effort to increase movie going, a new movie screen was installed. The result of research and experiments, the "Glascreen" had thousands of minute glass rods or fibers spun into glass yarn and woven into the screen. It was thought to improve both picture quality as well as sound. According to the theater manager, "The screen costs seven times what the old-fashioned type costs—but we feel the investment is worth it."[79] This was similar to changes in theaters country-wide.

At Loew's Jersey, the original air conditioning system was replaced as was the marquee. The original marquee design, which was shared by all five of the Loew's Wonder Theaters, was curved at the top, often referred to as a Napoleon's hat (Historic Photos 19-22, 26 and 27). After 1949, the existing marquee was built over the original. The new marquee included neon lights and was larger, making it easier to read, especially for passing cars (Historic Photo 30). All of the Loew's theaters seem to have had their marquees changed at this time. Later, at some point in the 1960s, the original vertical tower sign reading "Loew's Jersey" also was removed. During this period, additional sound equipment was added to the theater.

[76] *Jersey Observer* (Tuesday Evening, April 2, 1935), Vertical File, Theater, Loew's, Jersey City Free Public Library.
[77] Dennis G. Doran, "Loew's Jersey Theater National Register Nomination (November 20, 1984), 8-4; Conrad and Egan; "Blaze at Loew's is Slight." *Jersey Journal (*December 31, 1938), 1.
[78] "G. Dumond."
[79] "Hail Loew's Glascreen," *Jersey Journal* (September 21, 1949), 18.

The Loew's Jersey continued to run as a single theater movie house until 1974. With ticket sales slumping, however, it was broken up into a triplex, something that was occurring at movie theaters all over the country. It was closed for four months in 1974 and when it was reopened, it had three theaters: two theaters each seating 524 placed in the orchestra seating area beneath the balcony on the first floor and the main screen in the balcony with a seating capacity of 1,078. The stage was closed off and not used. The original organ, which hadn't been used in years, was removed from the theater at this time. Also, during these renovations, original mushroom air vents were filled in, probably to control sound, and new holes were installed. Today, the returns remain filled in the rear. At the front, they remain open. Surprisingly, the triplexing was quite sensitive. The New York Paradise was triplexed at the same time and the work was later reviewed by the New York Landmarks Commission. At the Paradise, the intent was to ensure that all the changes were reversible.[80] The same spirit seems to have infused the work at the Loew's Jersey. While the fountain at the mezzanine was not removed sensitively, the other changes were done such that the finishes could be restored with relative ease.

Following the triplexing of Loew's Jersey, the theater remained a first-run movie house. Although Journal Square remained a busy transit hub with thousands of commuters passing through it every day, nearby malls had lured away much of the high-end retail business from the area. New multiplex theaters, including one in Secaucus, had stolen much of the Loew's Jersey's business. More and more, only rowdy teenagers still went to the Loew's; it was considered a dangerous place. There were several incidents involving the police including shootings. Ultimately, in 1986 the Loew's Jersey was closed down. August 21, 1986 was its last night in operation showing *Friday the 13th Part VI*, *One Crazy Summer* and *Running Scared*.[81]

Fight for Loew's Jersey

Following its closure, the Loew's was sold to New Jersey's largest developer, Hartz Mountain. Hartz Mountain planned to tear down the majority of the building, leaving the façade and grand lobby and erect an office tower on the site with 500,000 square feet of office space. Demolition was scheduled for April 1987. By January 1987, however, Hartz Mountain had changed its approach and decided to tear down the entire building.[82]

Concerned citizens assembled to try to save the building. Two groups, the Hudson County Coalition to Save the Loew's Theatre and the Jersey City Historical and Preservation Association, merged into an organization called The Friends of the Loew's (FOL). They spoke to community groups and mounted displays at local events. Ten thousand people signed the petition supporting the preservation of the theater. They drew hundreds of people out to speak in favor of saving the Loew's at a dozen Planning Board and City Council hearings on the theater. In March 1987 Hartz filed a lawsuit against the city seeking permission to tear down the building or be compensated for incurred losses. FOL filed a friend of the court brief that convinced a judge to turn aside a demand for an immediate demolition permit for the Loew's.

[80] Colin Egan.
[81] Blanca Quintanilla, "Jason Lives but Not at Loew's Jersey City" *Jersey Journal* (August 22, 1986), 11.
[82] "Resurrecting Those Old Movie Palaces." *New York Times*. October 14, 1984; http://loewsjersey.org/alt/discover-mainmenu-40/loews-jersey-history-mainmenu-48.html.

As a result of their tireless efforts, in April 1987, the Jersey City Planning Board commissioned a feasibility study to be completed. Sponsored by the Jersey City Economic Development Corporation, Short and Ford Architects and The Atlantic Group, Urban Development Consultants completed the report in October 1987.[83]

The result of the study was that the Loew's Jersey Theatre site was rezoned for entertainment and cultural purposes. "In arguments filed in State Supreme Court in Jersey City, Hartz Mountain contended that the Municipal Planning Board and City Council had acted illegally in rezoning the theater site for entertainment and cultural purposes after Hartz Mountain had announced that it had bought the theater and wanted to build a $10 million office complex on the site." In April 1987, the City Council approved the redevelopment plan. It was vetoed by Mayor Cucci who argued that the City could not afford to save the theater. But on May 14, 1987, City Council overrode the Mayor's veto 6-2 which left the zoning restriction in place.

The fight continued. The Jersey City Economic Development Corporation joined in and helped FOL in convincing Jersey City to buy the theater. In the early morning hours of February 2, 1993, after listening to dozens of speakers in support of the Loew's, the City Council voted by a margin of one to buy the theater. The purchase price was a bargain at $325,000; the developer had paid $1.5 million. According to some though, the building would have been saved regardless: "In the end, the owner came to see that his building plan wouldn't work," said Colin Egan of the FOL, "The theater site is not your usual plot of land. It's built on a cliff, a crag, part of which you can see in the sub-basement. It would have cost $2 million to remove it." [84]

During the fight to save the building from 1987 to 1993, the Loew's Jersey was closed without power, heat or water. Remarkably, little historic fabric was lost over this period and the building remains mostly original. In 1993, the FOL were given a lease on the building by the City of Jersey City and established themselves as a not-for-profit arts center whose mission is to showcase "the art of American entertainment" -- the music, plays and movies that continue to shape and chronicle the American experience. Over the next eight years using skilled and unskilled labor and with grants and investments from the City of Jersey, the FOL began to restore the Loew's Jersey. They obtained a Temporary Certificate of Occupation in 2001 and since then, the theater has been used on a limited basis with some live shows, weddings and community events. The programming centers on a weekend classical movie series which runs throughout the year.

Criterion C: Loew's Jersey Theatre, a Rapp and Rapp Movie Palace

The Loew's Jersey Theatre is significant for its movie palace architecture. Designed by master movie palace architects, Rapp and Rapp, Loew's Jersey Theatre's period of significance is 1929, the year it opened. The lifespan of the Loew's Jersey epitomizes the movie palace movement. It was built during its peak, evolved into a movie house only, was revamped during the 1940s and '50s, was divided up in the 1970s, closed in 1986, was saved by private citizens in the 1990s and now operates as a classic movie house.

[83] Nancy Gerber, "Theater's Fate Uncertain," *Preservation Perspective*, Volume VII, Number 4 (May/June 1987), 1.
[84] http://loewsjersey.org/alt/discover-mainmenu-40/loews-jersey-history-mainmenu-48.html

Its extravagant terra cotta façade, prominent marquee and exuberant interior detailing mark the Loew's Jersey as a movie palace. This is further confirmed by its immense size—it originally could seat 3,100 people—and rich amenities which include lobbies, lounges, galleries, smoking rooms and music rooms. A fountain and phone booths, artwork and statures completed the luxury. Its wide range of offerings—movie, live shows, organ music, full orchestra—confirm its stature as a movie palace. The ushers, usherettes and doormen were an important part of the lavishness. The Loew's Jersey's complex circulation system enabled the movie palace to run continuous shows all day, ensuring tens of thousands of people were entertained daily with millions served over its years of operation. Designed at the peak of Rapp and Rapp's career, the Loew's Jersey Theatre is the pinnacle of movie palace architecture in New Jersey.

The Loew's Jersey Theatre also is the work of a master. Rapp and Rapp were the nation's premier movie palace architecture firm. They designed more than 400 theaters across the country including several movie palaces like the Tivoli in Chicago which was demolished in 1963 and the Paramount in New York, which was gutted and turned into retail and office space. It now houses the Hard Rock Café.[85]

The five Loew's Wonder Theaters built are all still extant. The 175th Street Theater in Manhattan was closed in 1969. It became a Christ United Church known as the Palace Cathedral for a couple of decades. In recent years, it has been a concert venue location known as the United Palace. Since 2013, classic, independent and foreign films are shown here. The Valencia in Queens is now the Tabernacle of Prayer for All People church. The auditorium has been restored and tours are offered occasionally. The Kings Theatre was restored in 2015 and operates as a state-of-the-art live performance venue. The Paradise in the Bronx was converted to a live performance venue in 2005 but was leased to a church in 2012. Its current use is unknown. None of these theaters appear to be listed on the National Register although the Paradise was designated a New York City Landmark in 1997 and the interior was designated in 2006.

There appear to be eleven theaters designated on the National Register in New Jersey. All but one are located in relatively small towns: three are designated as neighborhood movie houses, two are vaudeville theaters including Thomas Lamb's Strand Theatre in Lakewood and five were built as movie and live houses.[86] There are three extant theaters that rival Loew's Jersey in size and could be considered movie palaces. The 1927 Stanley in Newark by local architect Frank Grad had 1,969 seats; it was an atmospheric theater with simple, restrained ornamentation. Now the Newark Gospel Tabernacle, the building is not listed. The 1928 Stanley Theater of Journal Square designed by architect Fred Wesley Wentworth had 4,332 seats. Like the Newark Stanley, the interior of Journal Square Stanley is restrained in the Adamesque style. The Stanley Theater of Journal Square was listed on the New Jersey Register in 1981; it is now an Assembly Hall of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Another theater designed by Fred Wesley Wentworth is the 2,780-seat Ritz Theater in Elizabeth built in 1926. Although

[85] "United Palace of Cultural Arts," http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/44; "Paramount Theatre," http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/548; "How to Visit the Incredible Loew's Valencia 'Wonder' Theater in Queens, NY," NYC, Tours (November 1, 2018), https://visitalltheplaces.com/2018/11/01/how-to-visit-the-incredible-loews-valencia-wonder-theater-in-queens-ny/; Kings Theatre History, https://www.kingstheatre.com/about/history; "Loew's Paradise Theatre," http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/900.
[86] https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/SearchResults/

simpler than the Loew's Jersey, the Ritz has rich interior ornamentation. It is a performing arts center; it is not listed.[87]

Of the 121 Rapp and Rapp theaters documented by the website cinematreasures.org, 58 have been demolished, 79 are closed and only 19 are currently showing movies. A look through the National Register database indicates that at least 25 Rapp and Rapp theaters are included on the National Register; several are identified as "movie palaces." The Loew's Jersey is the only theater designed by the firm in the state.[88]

[87] NJ HPO NJ Movie Theaters excel spreadsheet
[88] http://cinematreasures.org/firms/51;
https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=%22national%20register%20of%20historic%20places%22%20%22rapp%20and%20rapp%22%20%22movie%20palace%22

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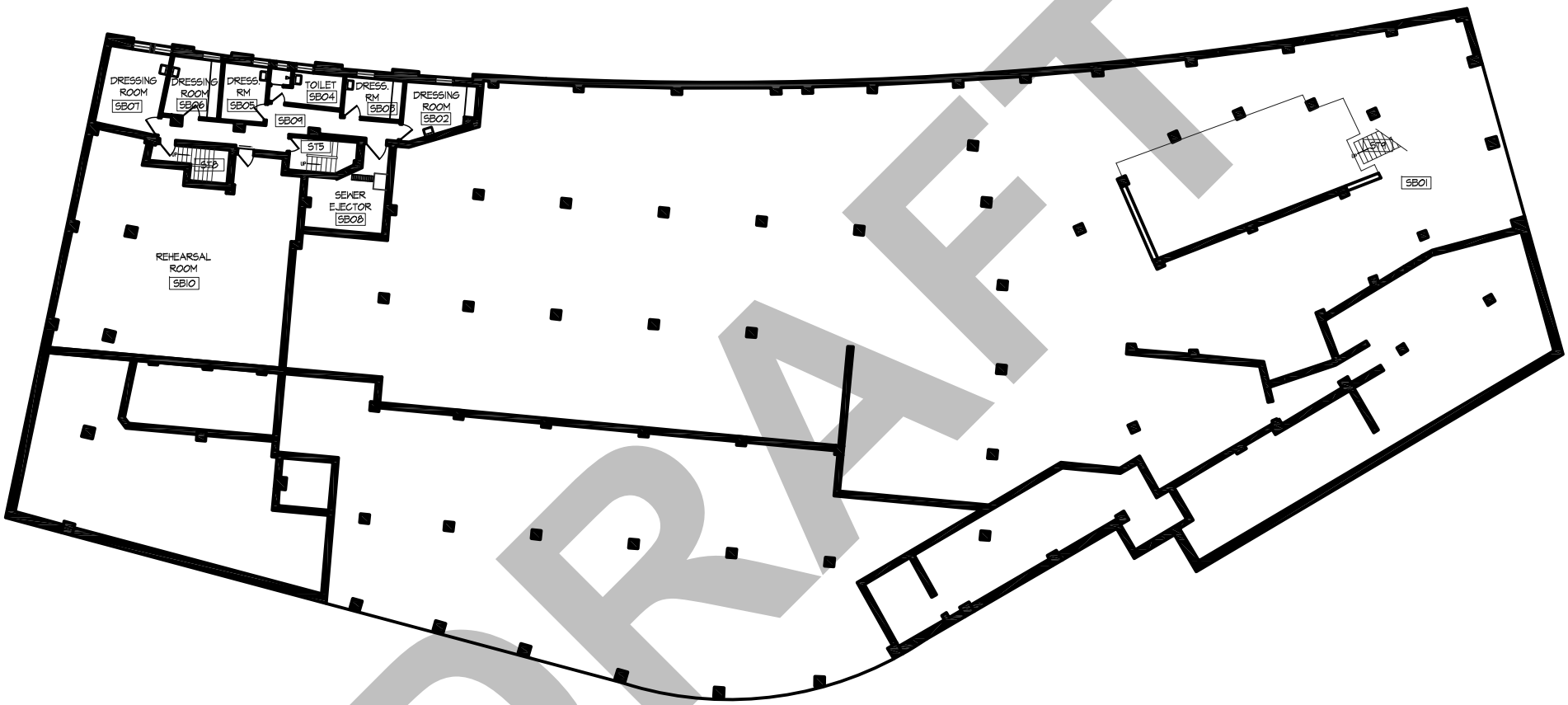
Verbal Boundary Description
Loew's Jersey Theatre consists of all of Block 10601, Lot 41 in Jersey City, Hudson County, New Jersey.

Boundary Justification Statement
This is the extent of the property, both originally and today.

1	East façade of Loew's Jersey Theatre	Samuel Loos	April 20, 2021
2	Under the original marquee looking north at entrance with its original features	Samuel Loos	April 20, 2021
3	The southeast corner of the building with altered storefront	Samuel Loos	April 20, 2021
4	The entrance vestibule looking north	Samuel Loos	April 20, 2021
5	The lobby looking east	Samuel Loos	April 20, 2021
6	The grand staircase at the south with orchestra foyer beyond	Samuel Loos	April 20, 2021
7	The auditorium under the balcony looking west at the grand proscenium and stage	Samuel Loos	April 20, 2021
8	The auditorium at the balcony looking southeast	Samuel Loos	April 20, 2021
9	The mezzanine foyer looking north	Samuel Loos	April 20, 2021
10	The promenade gallery to the musicians' lobby looking east	Samuel Loos	April 20, 2021
11	The gallery of the lobby looking east at the musicians' lobby	Samuel Loos	April 20, 2021
12	The musicians' lobby looking northeast	Samuel Loos	April 20, 2021

Loew's Jersey Theatre
Hudson County, NJ



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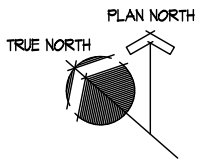
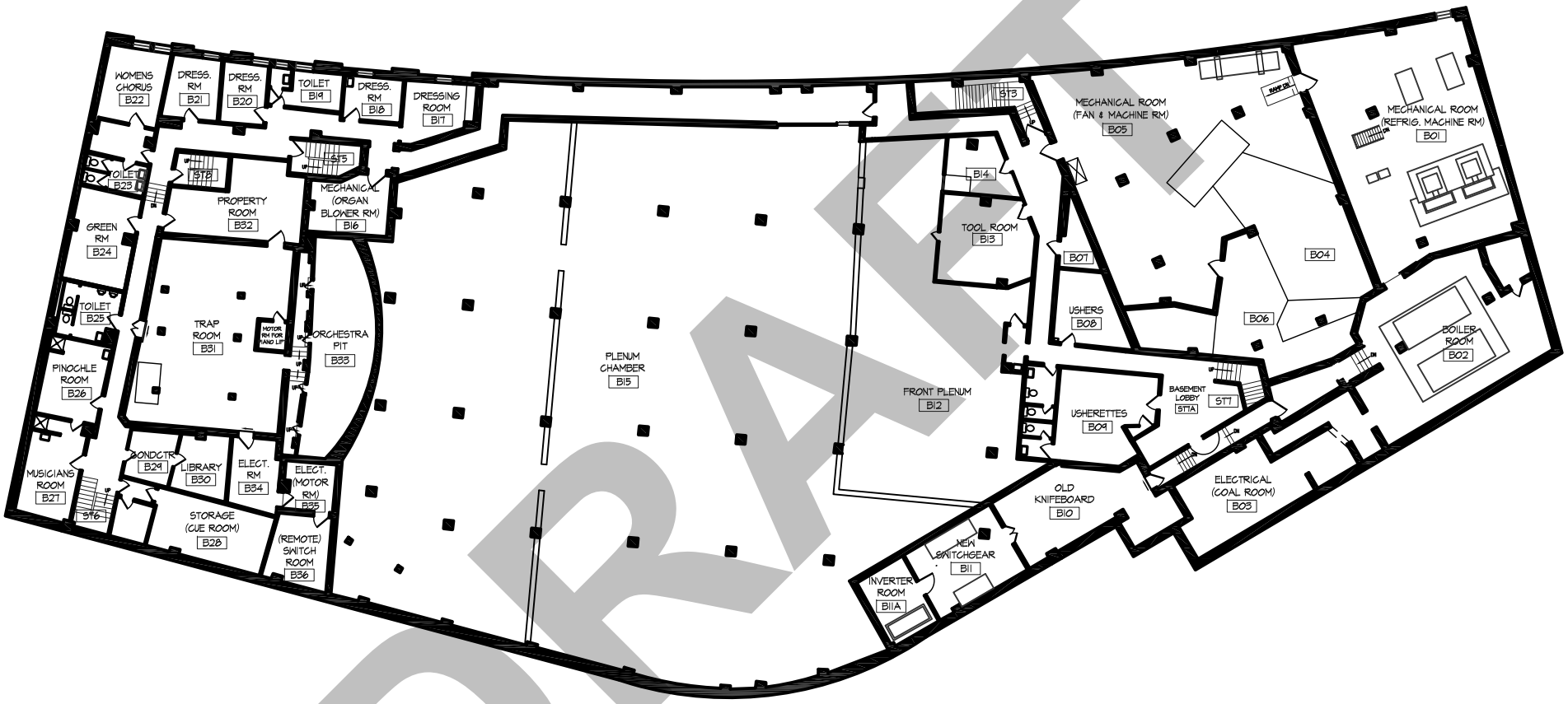
EX-1 SUB-BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: NTS



Loew's Jersey Theatre
Hudson County, NJ



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EX-2

BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN

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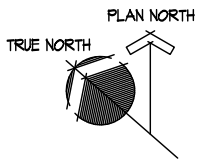

Loew's Jersey Theatre
Hudson County, NJ

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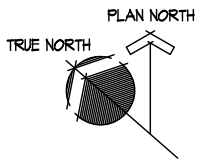
EX-3

GROUND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: NTS



Loew's Jersey Theatre
Hudson County, NJ

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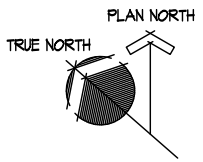
EX-4
MEZZANINE FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: NTS



Loew's Jersey Theatre
Hudson County, NJ

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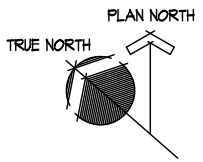
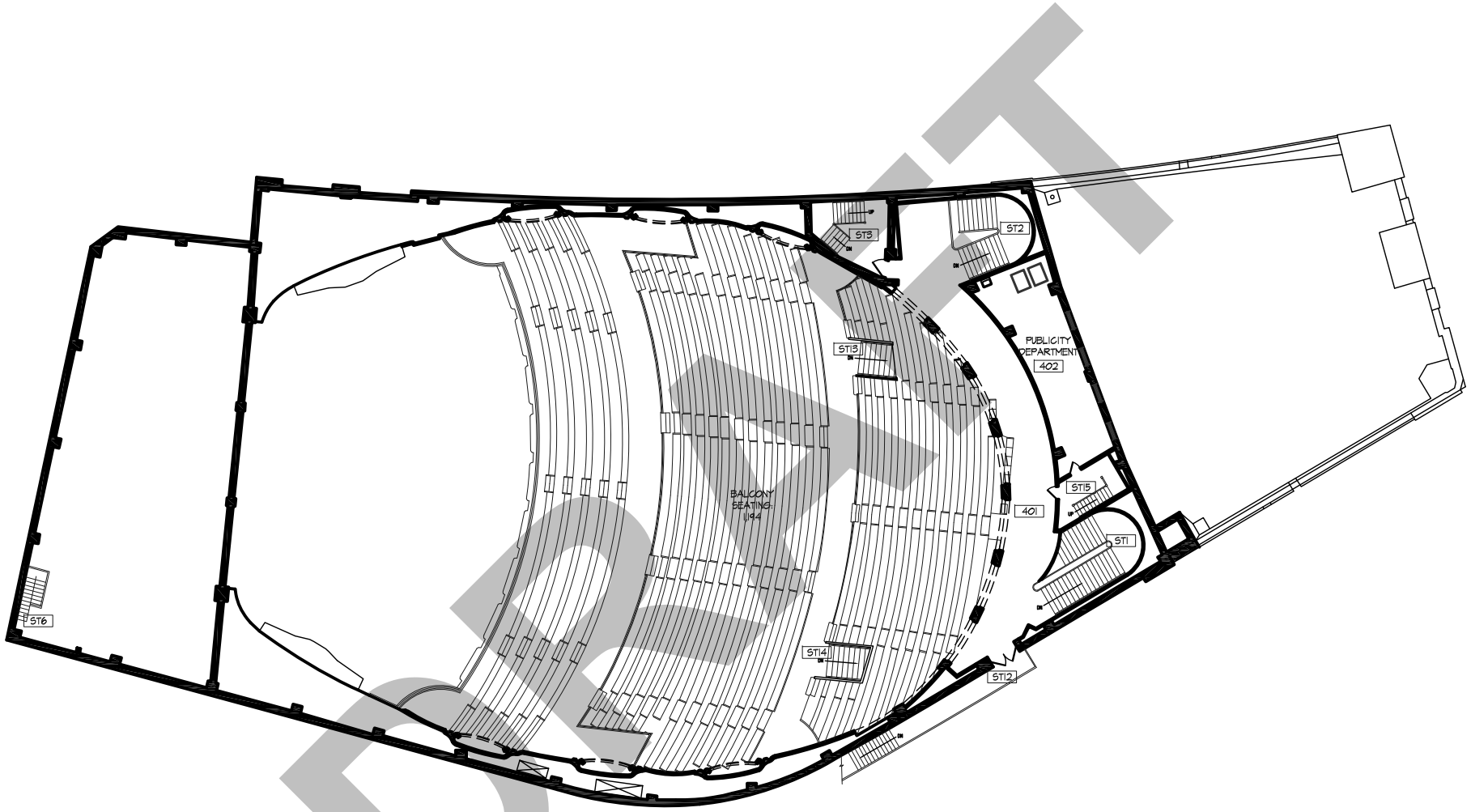
EX-5

BALCONY FOYER FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: NTS



Loew's Jersey Theatre
Hudson County, NJ



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EX-6

BALCONY FLOOR PLAN

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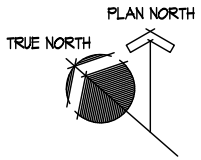
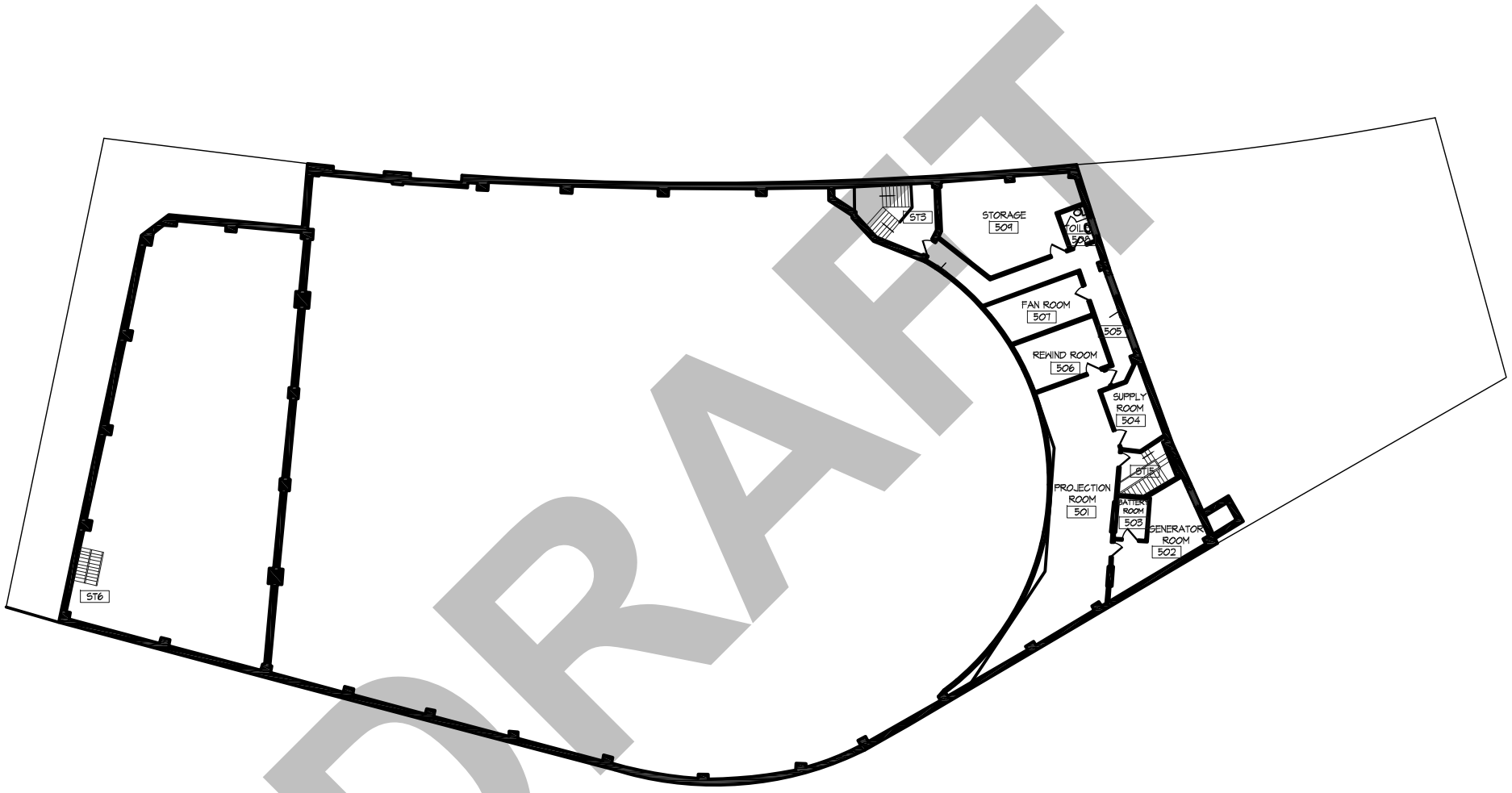


Loew's Jersey Theatre
Hudson County, NJ



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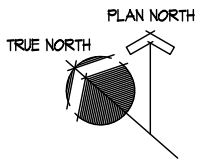
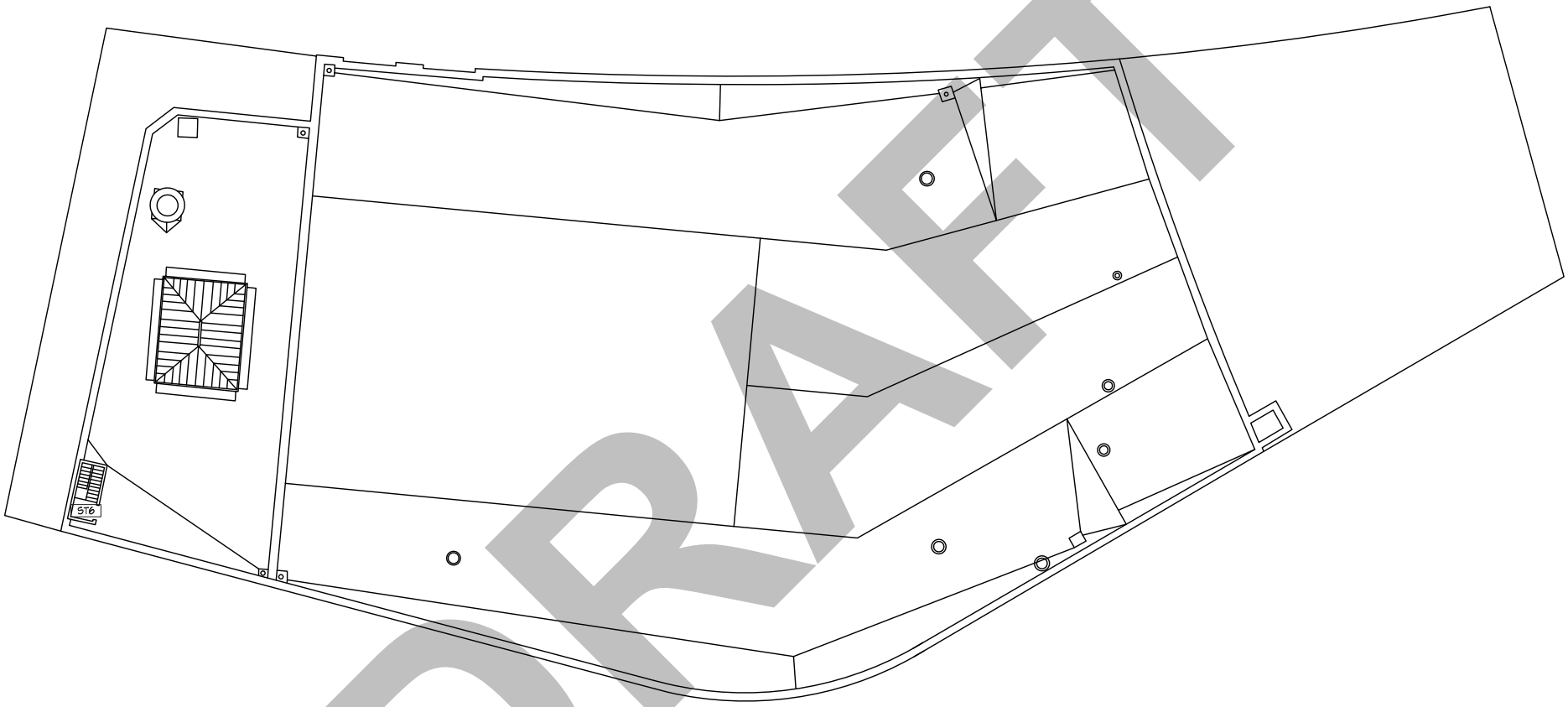
EX-7

ATTIC/PROJECTION RM FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: NTS



Loew's Jersey Theatre
Hudson County, NJ



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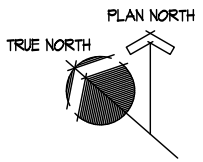
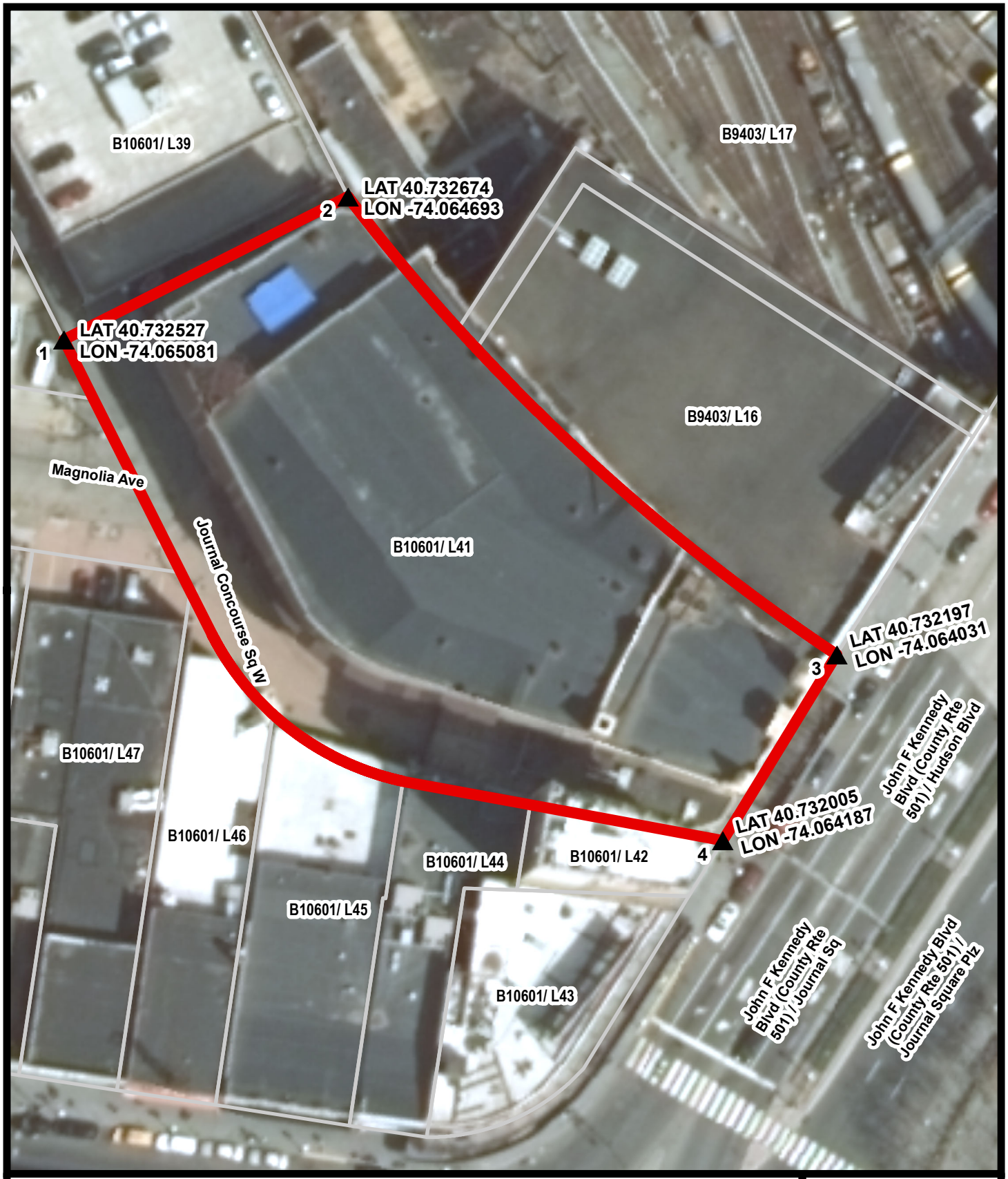
EX-8
ROOF PLAN
SCALE: NTS





Loew's Jersey Theatre

New Jersey and National Registers Nomination
Jersey City,
Hudson County,
New Jersey

Boundary and tax map

0 10 20 40 60 Feet

Datum: NAD 1983 State Plane New Jersey

Legend

- NJ & NR boundary
- Coordinates
- Tax Parcels

0.85 Acres

NJDEP,
Historic Preservation Office
August 2021

Historic Photo 1: Undated postcard of Journal Square

Historic Photo 2: The Loew's Jersey just before opening, 1929. From the New York Public Library

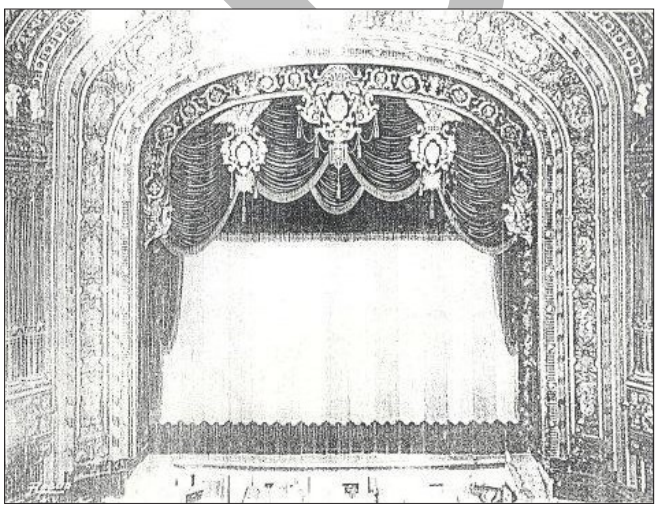
Historic Photo 3: Looking south under the marquis, 1929. From the New York Public Library.

Historic Photo 4: Looking north in the vestibule, 1929. From the New York Public Library.

Historic Photo 5: Grand lobby looking west, 1929. From the New York Public Library

Historic Photo 6: Historic Photo 7: Grand lobby looking east, 1929. From the New York Public Library

Historic Photo 7:South stair up to mezzanine foyer, 1929. From the New York Public Library



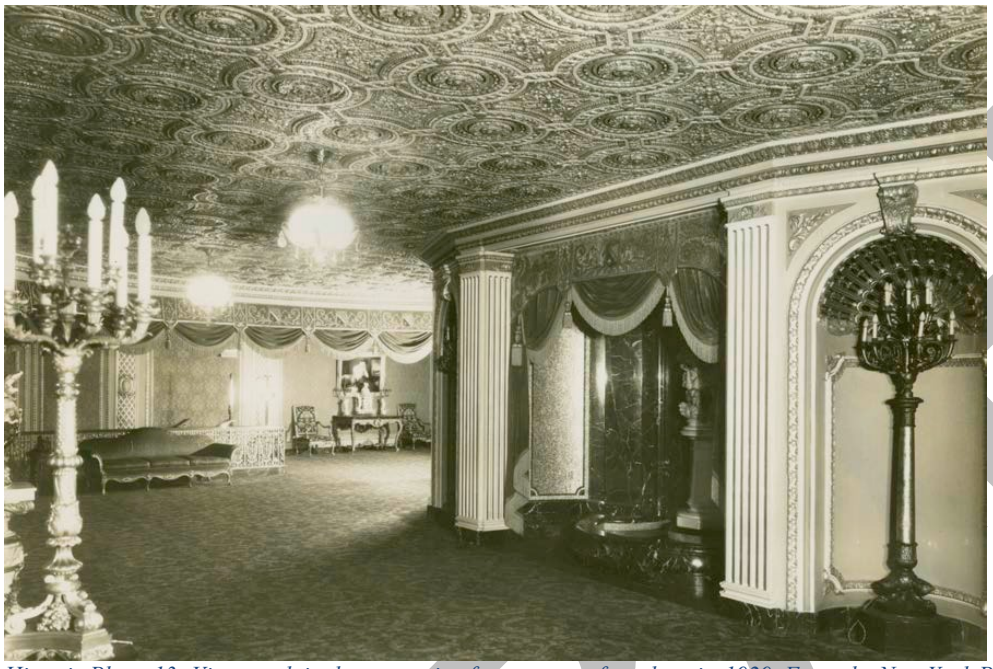
Historic Photo 8: The proscenium, 1929. From the New York Public Library

Historic Photo 9: The auditorium looking east, 1929. From the New York Public Library

Historic Photo 10: Balcony seating in the auditorium, 1929. From the New York Public Library

Historic Photo 11: Ceiling of the dome in the auditorium, 1929. From the New York Public Library

Historic Photo 12: View north in the mezzanine foyer at top of south stair, 1929. From the New York Public Library



Historic Photo 13: View south in the mezzanine foyer at top of south stair, 1929. From the New York Public Library

Historic Photo 14: The fountain at the center of the mezzanine foyer, 1929. From the New York Public Library

Historic Photo 15: Women's Lounge, 1929. From the New York Public Library

Historic Photo 16: Women's Cosmetic Room, 1929. From the New York Public Library

Historic Photo 17: Men's Lounge, 1929. From the New York Public Library

Historic Photo 18: Musician's Gallery, view northeast. From the New York Public Library

Historic Photo 19: September 3, 1929, the day after opening. From the Jersey Journal

Historic Photo 20: Loew's "Wonder Theatre" 1930

Historic Photo 21: 1938 from the Friends of Loew's website

Historic Photo 22: 1944 from the Jersey City Public Library

Historic Photo 23: 1944 from the Jersey City Public Library

Historic Photo 24: 1943 from the Jersey City Public Library

Historic Photo 25: 1945 from the Jersey City Public Library

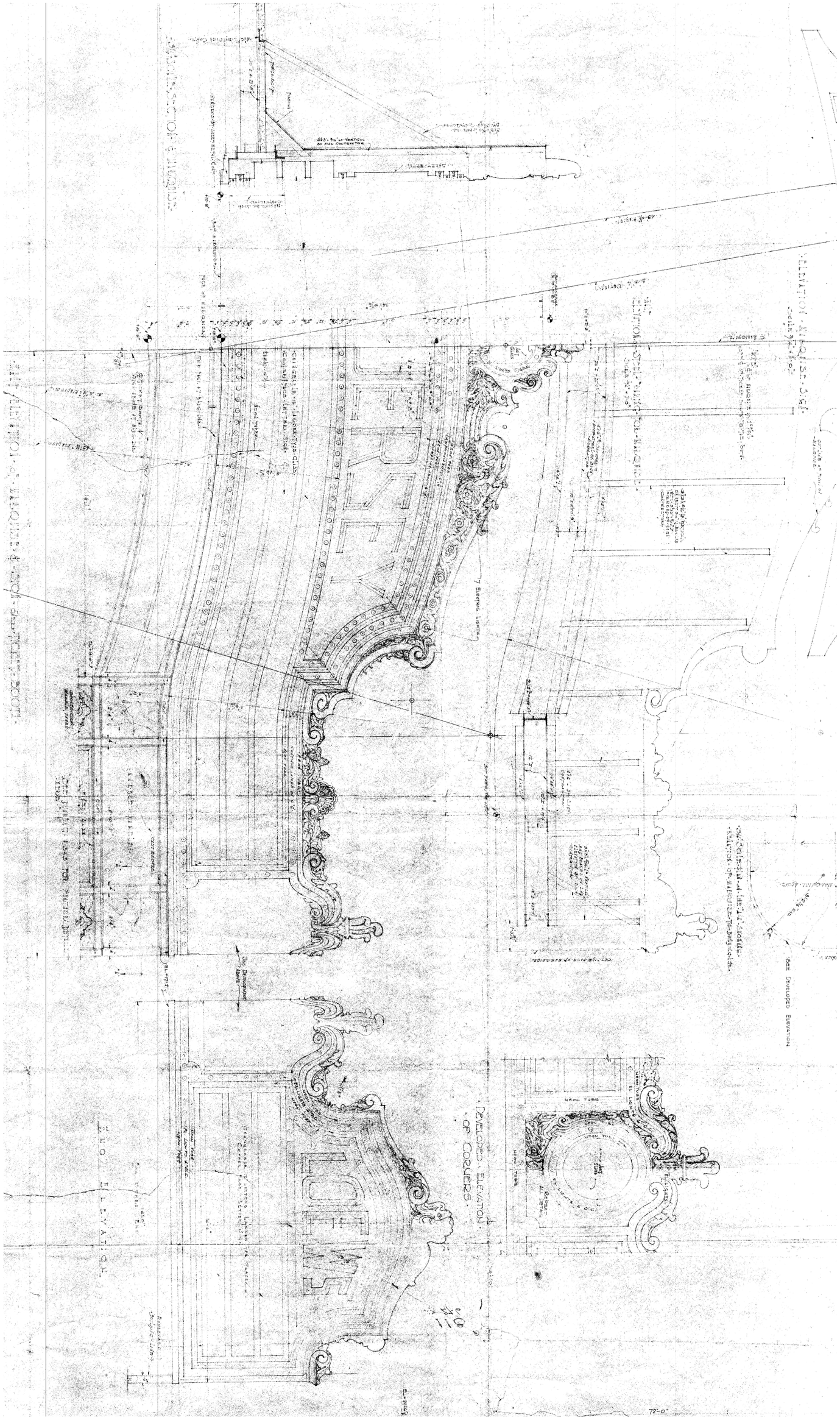
Historic Photo 26: 1947 from the Jersey City Public Library

Historic Photo 27: 1949 from Changing Jersey City

Historic Photo 28: 1952 from the Jersey City Public Library

Historic Photo 29: The 25th Anniversary of the theater in 1954 from the Jersey City Public Library

Historic Photo 30: Loew's Theatre in 1960.



NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION

LOEW'S JERSEY THEATRE

54 JOURNAL SQUARE

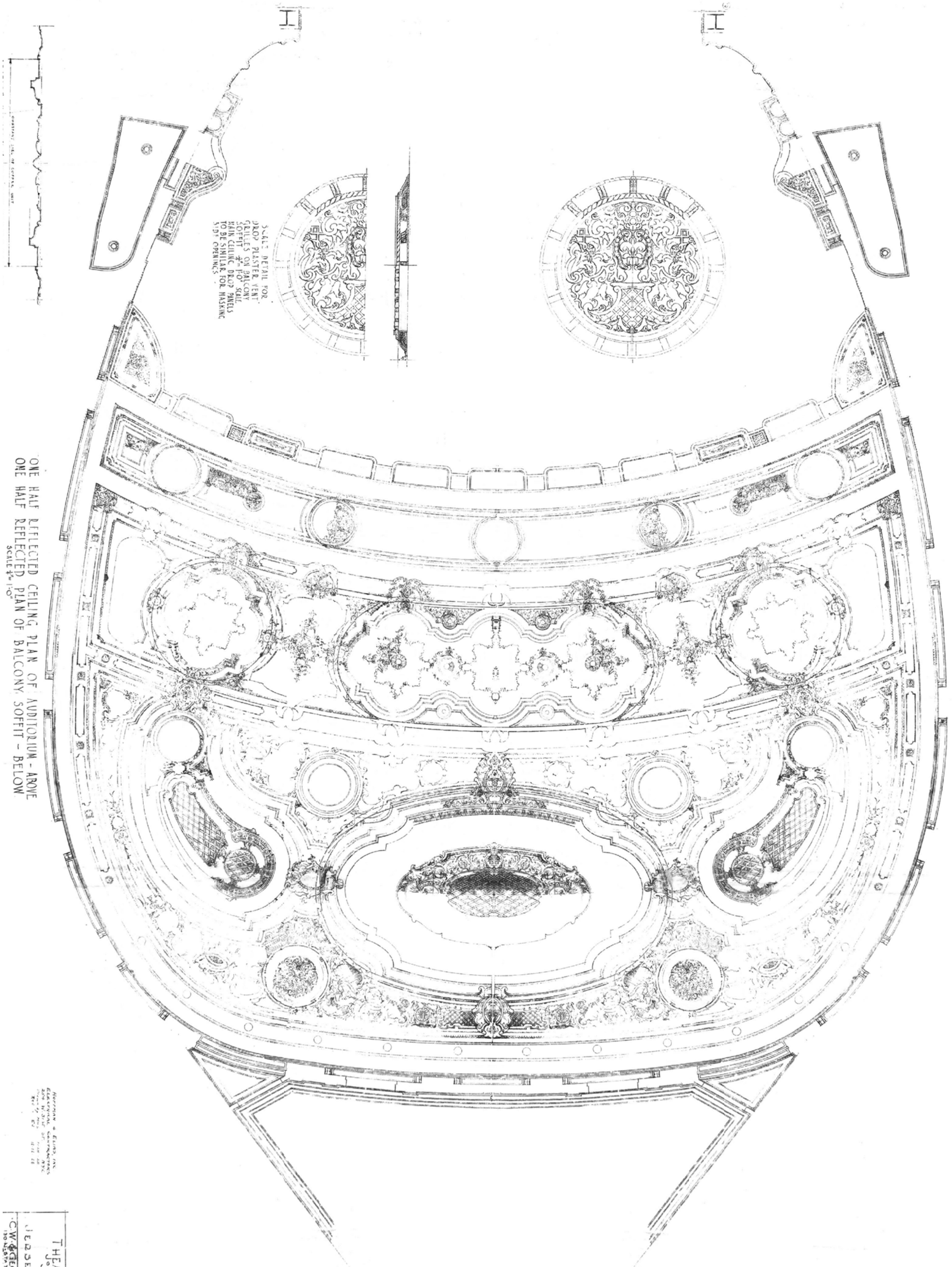
HUDSON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

HMR ARCHITECTS
821 ALEXANDER ROAD - SUITE 115
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY 08540
609-452-1070 - HMR-ARCHITECTS.COM

1929 MARQUEE DETAILS

SCALE: NTS
DRAWN BY:
DATE: 08/20/21

A-1



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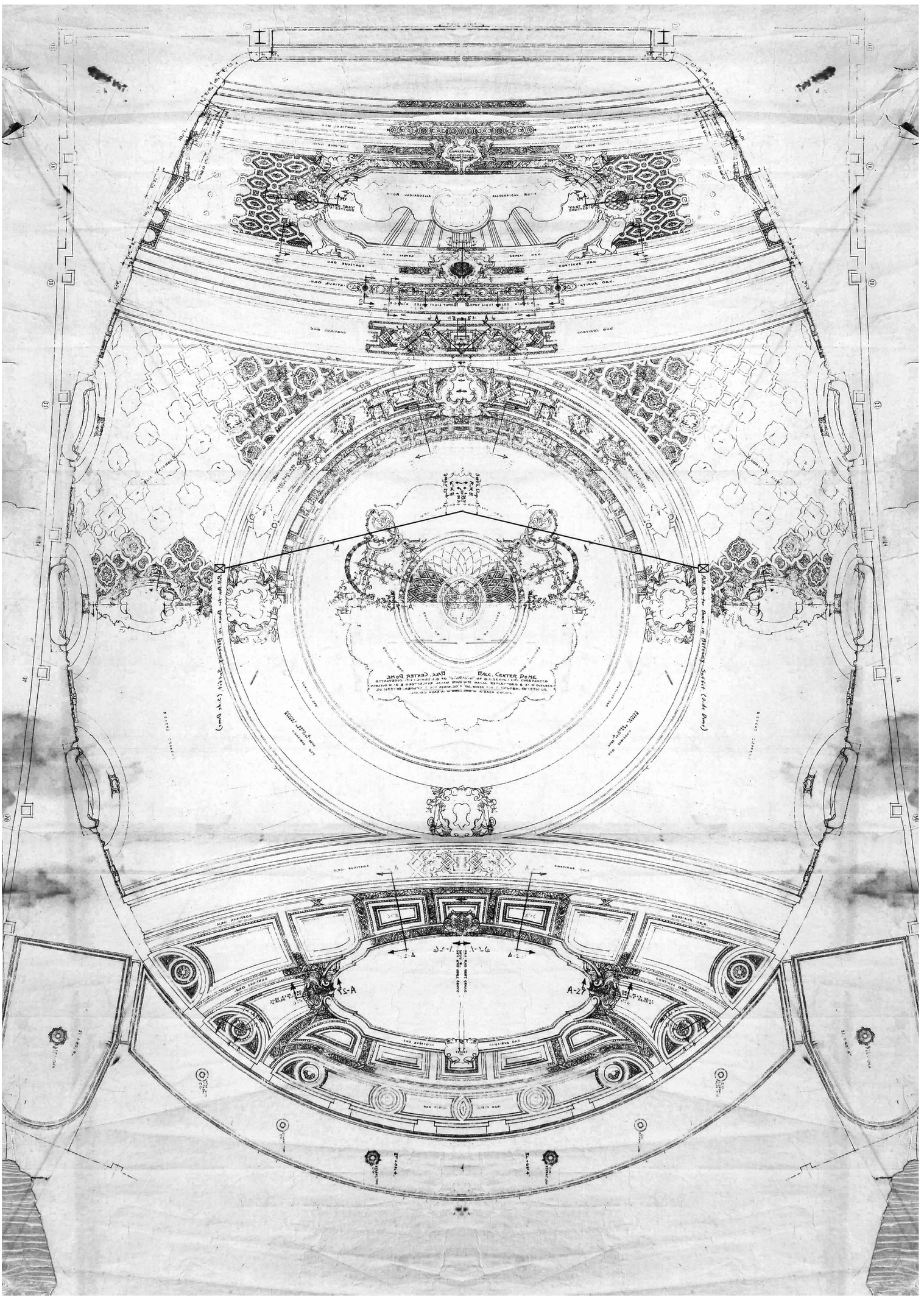
SCALE: NTS
DRAWN BY:
DATE: 06/04/21

1928 LOWER BALCONY CLG PLAN

A-2



NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION

LOEW'S JERSEY THEATRE

54 JOURNAL SQUARE

HUDSON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

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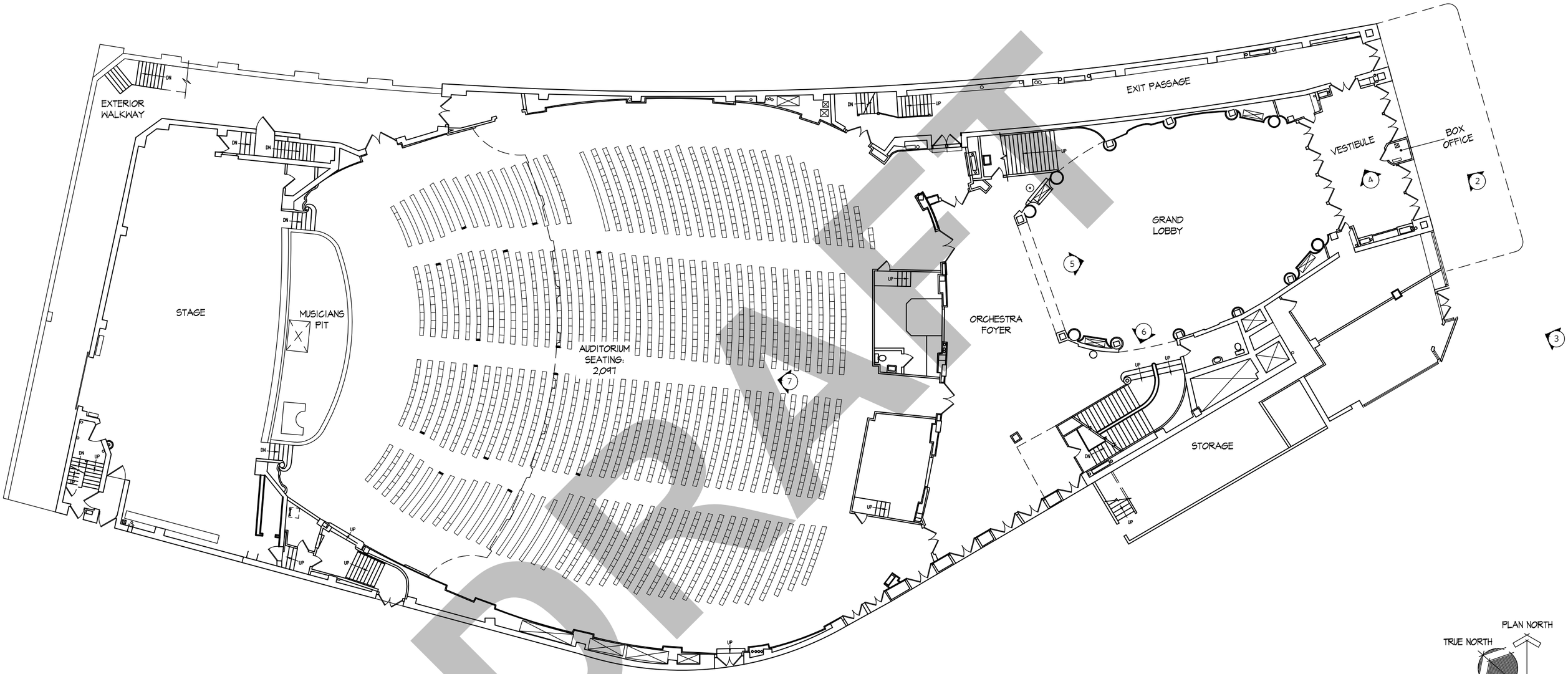
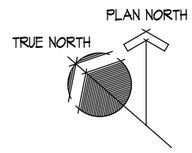
1928 AUDITORIUM CLG PLAN

SCALE: NTS
DRAWN BY:
DATE: 08/20/21

A-3

Loew's Jersey Theatre
National Register Nomination
54 Journal Square, Jersey City, Hudson County, New Jersey
Photo Key - Site





Loew's Jersey Theatre
National Register Nomination
54 Journal Square, Jersey City,
Hudson County, New Jersey
Photo Key - First Floor

Loew's Jersey Theatre
National Register Nomination
54 Journal Square, Jersey City,
Hudson County, New Jersey
Photo Key - First Floor

Photo 1: East façade of Loew's Jersey Theatre

Photo 2: Under the original marquee looking north at entrance with its original features

Photo 3: The southeast corner of the building with altered storefront

Photo 4: The entrance vestibule looking north

Photo 5: The lobby looking east

Photo 6: The grand staircase at the south with orchestra foyer beyond

Photo 7: The auditorium under the balcony looking west at the grand proscenium and stage

Photo 8: The auditorium at the balcony looking southeast

Photo 9: The mezzanine foyer looking north

Photo 10: The promenade gallery to the musicians' lobby looking east

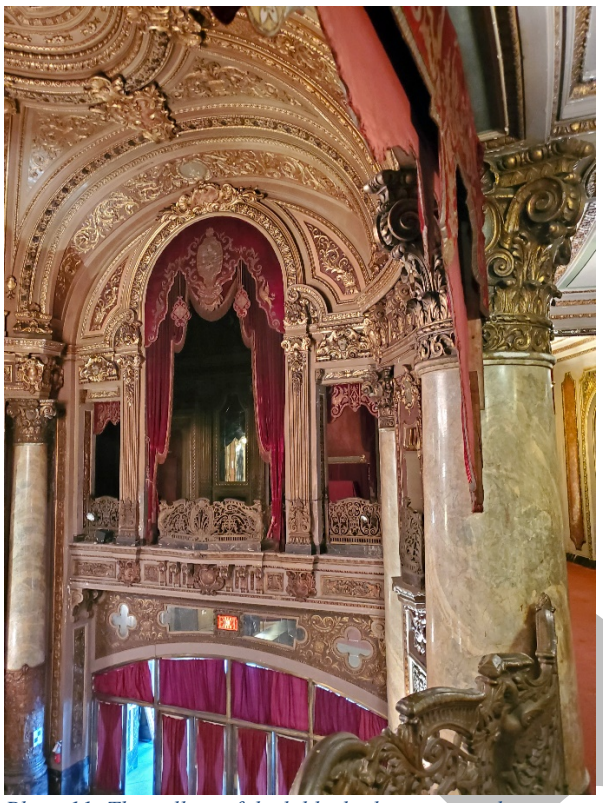


Photo 11: The gallery of the lobby looking east at the musicians' lobby

Photo 12: The musicians' lobby looking northeast