

VLR - 6/14/00
NRHP - 11/22/00

(Rev. 10-90)
NPS Form 10-900

OMB No. 1024-0018

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 for individual properties and 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 any 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 from 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 Beacon Theatre DHR File # 116-0010
other names/site number Broadway Theatre

2. Location

street & number 401 North Main Street not for publication
city or town Hopewell vicinity _____
state Virginia code VA county Independent City code 670 Zip 23860

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby 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 X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 10/3/2000
Signature of certifying official Date
Virginia Department of 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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- 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): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	objects
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: _____	Sub: _____
Domestic _____	Apartment _____
Commerce/Trade _____	Storefront Offices _____
Social _____	Meeting Hall Civic Group _____
Recreation & Culture _____	Theater, Auditorium _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: _____	Sub: _____
_____ Vacant / Not in use _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

_____ Colonial Revival/ _____ Modern movement - Art Deco

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____ concrete & brick _____
roof _____ built up asphalt/single ply rubber _____
walls _____ brick _____

other _____ wood windows and storefronts _____

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.
- 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.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture _____

Entertainment/ Recreation _____

Period of Significance _____

1928 -1950 _____

Significant Dates 1928 _____

1932 _____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder ___ Osbert L. Edwards, Architect _____
___ Fred Bishop, Architect _____

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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
- ___ Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1 18	<u>297260</u>	4130910	2 <u> </u> <u> </u>
3 <u> </u>	<u> </u>	4 <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u>

 See continuation sheet.

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

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: B.J. Loudermilk / Executive Director

Organization: Beacon Theatre/ Hopewell Preservation, Inc. date April 3, 2000

street & number: 401 North Main Street telephone 804 541-3359

city or town Hopewell state Virginia zip code 23860

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____ Hopewell Preservation, Inc.

street & number 401 North Main Street (mailing address -PO Box 28) telephone 804-
5413359

city or town _____ Hopewell _____ state Virginia zip code 23860

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Beacon Theatre
City of Hopewell, VA

Section 7 Page 1

7. Summary Description:

The Beacon Theatre (originally called the Broadway Theatre) is a three-story, 20th-century vaudeville and movie theater with storefront commercial space, second-floor apartments and third-floor meeting space. Architecturally, the theater combines features of late 19th- and 20th-century revival styles with elements of the Art Deco, or other modern movements. The exterior features decorative bands of flush brickwork punctuated with rectangular cast-stone corner blocks, typical of Art Deco work, in addition to cast-stone detailing in the parapet coping and in the decoration on the primary façade. The interior of the theater is adorned with classical plaster friezes, an elaborate proscenium, and a cove ceiling in the auditorium. The theater's public space, as well as the storefront, apartment and meeting spaces, have plaster walls with simple trim. The original marquee and theater sign are no longer in place, but the theater retains two of its early movie projectors. The theater was designed by local architect Osbert L. Edwards and Fred Bishop of Richmond, Virginia, the architect for Richmond's Byrd Theatre. The Beacon Theatre was built at the height of the vaudeville period with classical elements reflecting the thespian lineage of the theater arts. The Beacon Theatre is an excellent example of a mid-size atmospheric vaudeville theater. It still retains a large portion of its original architectural and decorative detailing.

Architectural Analysis

The Beacon Theatre with its associated commercial space sits on the corner of East Cawson and North Main Streets with its main facade facing East Cawson Street. The lot is irregularly shaped with a corner entry leading into the theater. A plain masonry wall with fire exits faces Main Street on the west. The south wall opens onto a city easement and consists of a fire exit from orchestra level on the first floor with solid walls to the roof and the top of the stage house. The east wall is the rear of the stage house and has no openings. There is a ghost mark in the masonry indicating a previous one-story structure, now torn down, adjacent to the stage house.

The Beacon is a three-story, 20th century commercial building with a vaudeville theater to the rear of the property, first-floor storefront offices, apartments on the second floor and a third-floor meeting hall for the fraternal order, the Knights of Pythias. These spaces were originally accessed by a stair entered from the Main Street side of the building. The structure has a flat roof system with parapet walls, scuppers, collector heads and downspouts.

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The main façade is divided into three sections. The corner portion houses the main entrance to the theater and leads to an entry lobby hall for access to the auditorium space. The marquee that sheltered this entry no longer exists, but its restoration is planned. Above the marquee at the second floor level are three pairs of one-over-one double-hung windows. Each pair is capped by a round arch formed of cast-stone in a fan pattern. At the third floor is a single pair of four-over-four double-hung sash. Above and on either side of this window are decorative bands of flush brickwork punctuated with rectangular cast stone corner blocks. This brickwork is typical of art deco work of the late 20s and early 30s. There is a minimal curvilinear parapet below which is a round cast panel with four segmental keystones. From the right side of the corner section a large vertical lighted sign once hung. There are plans to put a replica of this sign back in place.

The central section of the north façade is articulated with two storefronts facing onto the sidewalk. The storefronts are of wood construction with large single pane storefront windows with transoms above on either side of center doors. The wood doors have single glass panels. There are four paired second-floor windows with one-over-one sash. Small square cast stone blocks mark the corners of the stretcher bands that frame all of the first and second floor openings.

The eastern section of the north façade features a lower parapet and smaller windows at both the third-and first-floor levels. The windows on the second floor are single windows with two-over-two sash and the same cast-stone detailing as found in the central section of the north façade. The windows on the third floor are single four-over-two windows. The small two-over-two windows on the first floor open into areas that were historically toilet rooms. There is a single entry door to a stair hall at approximately the center point of the building another to the toilet area farther along and finally a double stage door at the east end of the façade.

The west façade has four pairs of double doors exiting from the auditorium lobby to the sidewalk. These served as fire exit doors for the rear of house. There are two windows in the upper portion of this wall, which opened into the Projection Booth and served as ventilation and light for that space. There is a single window that opens into the stairway from the balcony lobby level at the southernmost portion of the west wall.

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Beacon Theatre
City of Hopewell, VA

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Interior

The stage, auditorium, and lobby combine to form a large rectangle to the rear of the site. The remaining portion of the building served as commercial and office space opening to Cawson Street. This constituted revenue-generating space that helped to support the theater. This combination of commercial space with performance space was used extensively throughout the latter half of the 19th century and well into the 20th. The commercial space had simple austere trim and plaster over wood partitions. Most of the interior walls have been altered through the years to accommodate changing uses.

The theater space was far more elaborate than the commercial spaces. The wide-ranging classical detailing used throughout the theater is indicative of the atmosphere that the original architect was trying to create. The mosaic tile floors have Greek key borders. The plaster walls of the halls are heavily textured and were originally decoratively glazed. The ceilings feature bands of plaster detailing around the edges which differ from section to section and included anthemions, egg-and-dart, rope and beaded moldings, rococo panels and other decorative devices.

The auditorium contains a flat ceiling which transitions into a smooth cove on all sides. The cove rests on a plaster entablature that may once have concealed indirect lighting to wash the light the ceiling. The frieze contains a patten of alternating torches and garlands with ribbons.

Below the frieze on the walls of the auditorium are a series of large panels. Flanking the stage are tall vertical panels outlined in foliated bands within which are two lesser panels. The upper tall panel on each side is filled with a geometric grill backed by fabric; the lower short horizontal panel is filled with a plaster relief featuring dancing maidens in classical attitudes. Tall narrow panels intervene on each side before another large panel enclosing two panels occurs. The upper panel here has no grill, but otherwise the arrangement is repeated. Above and below the balcony on the walls are large horizontal panels framing fabric.

The proscenium arch is framed by a wide picture-frame like molding covered with an overall geometric foliated pattern in low relief. Some of the original seating, with cameo end standards, remains in the balcony.

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**Beacon Theatre
City of Hopewell, VA**

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The major alterations associated with the theater include the removal of the original seats at the orchestra level and most of the balcony level and replacement of the entry doors to the main lobby. The orchestra pit was once covered, but has recently been reopened.

The non-theater spaces have been greatly altered over the last 70 years. Large portions of the second floor have been removed along with most of the interior partition walls. The first floor has been altered and the stairs toward the east portion of the commercial area have been partially removed. Most of the finishes in the commercial area have also been removed.

The Beacon Theater is significant not only because of its architectural design and details, but also because of the rarity of the building type. Because the economics of cinema presentation changed so drastically following the breakup of the major production cinema houses and because modern cinema houses lacked stage facilities, the vaudeville houses fell out of favor. Over time and with limited maintenance, the large theaters became too expensive to operate. For these reasons, many of the theatrical venues of the early 20th century have been lost to demolition and neglect. The Beacon Theater has been acquired by a nonprofit organization that is raising funds to repair the theater and carry out a complete restoration to return it to use as a performance and meeting space.

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Beacon Theatre
City of Hopewell, VA

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8. Statement of Significance

The Beacon Theatre is a three-story, brick theater building with a prominent corner entrance at the intersection of North Main and East Cawson Streets in Hopewell, Virginia. Opened in 1928, the theater housed commercial and apartment space and a meeting hall for the Knights of Pythias in addition to the auditorium and related theater spaces. It is significant under Criteria C at the local level for its eclectic, early 20th-century architectural design, which combines elements of Art Deco with Colonial Revival. Elaborate plaster friezes and classical motifs decorate the inside of the building. The provision for commercial and residential space in the building allowed for potential alternate sources of income for the theater. The use of commercial and office space to underwrite a theater is typical of opera houses and vaudeville theaters from the 1870s to the mid-1930s. The Beacon Theatre remained a theater offering live performances and movies until it closed in 1981. Recently, rehabilitation work on the theater has begun with the goal of returning the building to a performance and meeting place in downtown Hopewell. In so doing, the building will once again play an important role in the cultural and recreational life of the Hopewell and the surrounding communities.

Historical Background

The Beacon Theatre was founded by M. T. Broyhill, C. B. Swain, and John Cunningham, original partners in the Hopewell Amusement Corporation. The theater was designed by architects Osbert L. Edwards of Hopewell and Fred Bishop of Richmond. Bishop designed Richmond's 1928 Byrd Theatre on West Cary Street. The theater was constructed by W. W. Thompson and was intended for the showing of "high class moving pictures" according to accounts in the *Hopewell News*. It did, however, include a stage "equipped with every convenience for the exposition of all classes of drama." In the early days of moving pictures, there was doubt about whether or not they would replace stage productions. Therefore, the Broadway was equipped with a \$10,000 organ and had seating for a six-piece orchestra. Built for \$150,000, the Broadway had seating for 981 people. It was a major source of community pride for the growing community of Hopewell.

The storefront space housed the original office of the *Hopewell News*, the city's newspaper. The second floor contained apartments (probably used in early years as housing for vaudeville performers) and the third floor was a meeting hall for Lodge 141 of the Knights of Pythias.

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The new theater, of course, was a source of pride for Hopewell and was of interest in nearby areas, as well. The Petersburg *Progress-Index* suggested during the construction phase that the completed project "will give Hopewell a first class playhouse." The theater opened on Wednesday, November 28, 1928 with a showing of the movie, "Foreign Legion". More praise followed in the Petersburg press following the opening night: "Modern in every respect, the Broadway Theatre, in Hopewell, presents to the theatergoer of this city a beautiful motion picture show. The theater is artistically decorated and compares with those of much larger cities." During its first years of operation live vaudeville, concerts, silent movies and organ recitals were regular offerings at the theater.

In 1932, the Hopewell Amusement Corporation defaulted on its loans and the Broadway was auctioned off. It was purchased by George Rollor and George Stath and the name was officially changed to the Beacon Theatre. From 1930 to 1950, the Beacon Theatre served as a showcase for live performances as well as movies. Residents of Hopewell recall Sally Rand's 1933 appearance, direct from the World's Fair, when she danced on the Beacon Theatre stage. Lash LaRue and Gabby Hayes delighted all at the Beacon Theatre before one of their cowboy movies was shown. During World War II, residents recall that soldiers stationed at nearby Fort Lee received free admission to movies at the Beacon. The Beacon continued to show movies until the late 1970s and a few live concerts were held there after it ceased to show movies. In 1981 the Beacon Theatre closed its doors to the public for the last time.

In 1987 Hopewell Preservation, Inc., a non-profit organization of local citizens, rescued the Beacon. Since then fund raising efforts have been underway and minimal maintenance performed. In November of 1999 a major rehabilitation of the Beacon was begun with the goal of returning the theater to use as a performance and meeting place. The theater commands a dominant position at a major intersection, faces the newly constructed city hall plaza, and is viewed as a significant element in the revitalization of downtown Hopewell. The Beacon Theatre was recently designated as one of America's Treasures by the Save America's Treasures Foundation.

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Beacon Theatre
City of Hopewell, VA

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Bibliography

Almond, Killis, FAIA; Almond & Associates, San Antonio, Texas, 78210. "Master Plan for the Beacon Theatre"; and personal interviews. 1998-1999,

Appomattox Regional Library collections. Hopewell, Virginia.

Calos, Mary M.; Charlotte Easterling and Ella Sue Rayburn. Old City Point & Hopewell (First 370 years): Norfolk, Donning Co., 1983.

Hopewell Chamber of Commerce. "Facts You Should Know About Hopewell."
Hopewell:1939.

Hopewell News newspaper files from 1927 through 2000 and personal interview with Hank Bilyeau, editor.

Library of Virginia collections, Richmond, Virginia.

Petersburg Public Library collections, Petersburg, Virginia.

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The Beacon Theatre is identified as parcel number 80-980 on the tax parcel map 17/3/10/47-49 for the City of Hopewell, Virginia.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the one building known as the Beacon Theatre at the corner of North Main and East Cawson Streets in downtown Hopewell, Virginia.

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**Beacon Theatre
City of Hopewell, VA**

Section Photo List Page 8

The following information is the same for all photographs:

Property: The Beacon Theatre

Location: Hopewell, Virginia

Negatives filed at the Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia

Photo 1 of 9

View: North Main Street and East Cawson Street façades

Photographer: Jean McRae

Date: 1997

Negative Number: 15786

Photo 2 of 9

View: North Main Street entrance to theatre, detail

Photographer: Jean McRae

Date: 1997

Negative Number: 15786

Photo 3 of 9

View: Balcony seating

Photographer: Joann Longworth

Date: 1999

Negative Number: 18219

Photo 4 of 9

View: Auditorium frieze

Photographer: Killis Allmond

Date: 1998

Negative Number 18219

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Beacon Theatre
City of Hopewell, VA

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Photo 5 of 9

View: Auditorium panels

Photographer: Joann Longworth

Date: 1999

Negative Number 18219

Photo 6 of 9

View: Auditorium facing proscenium

Photographer: Joann Longworth

Date: 1999

Negative Number 18219

Photo 7 of 9

View: Hall

Photographer: Joann Longworth

Date: 1999

Negative Number 18219

Photo 8 of 9

View: Hall ceiling

Photographer: Joann Longworth

Date: 1999

Negative Number 18219

Photo 9 of 9

View: Historic view of the Broadway (Beacon) Theatre

Photographer: Unknown

Date: ca. 1928-1930

Negative Number 18219



Beacon Theatre
 Hopewell, VA
 116-0010
 Zone Easting Northing
 18 297260 4130710

4133
 4132 (WESTOVER) 5558 1 SW 281
 4131
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17'30"
 1129

GARSVILLE 6 MI
 SURRY 28 MI

Eppes Island

M E S

Tidal Flat

City Point
 PETERSBURG
 NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD
 Tidal Flat
 Light

Tidal Flat
 Light
 National
 Hospital
 Tidal Flat

RIVER

RIVER

PRINCE GEORGE CO
 HOPWELL CITY
 Industrial Waste Ponds
 Sewage Disposal
 Tidal Flat
 Light
 Water Tank

HOPWELL
 National
 Hospital
 Tidal Flat
 Light
 James Sch
 Res
 Highland Park
 AVE
 WESTERN
 AVE
 Shopping Center
 Wubben
 High Sch

Industrial Waste
 Ponds
 Sewage Disposal
 Tidal Flat
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