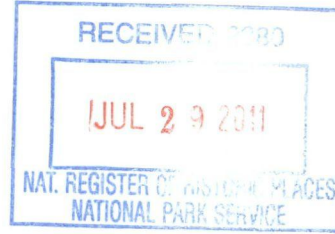


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



652

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Edna Theatre
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 201 W. Main Street
CITY OR TOWN: Edna
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Jackson
 NOT FOR PUBLICATION
 VICINITY
CODE: 239 ZIP CODE: 77957

1. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 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.)

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer Date 7/21/11
Signature of certifying official / Title
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

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 / bureau or Tribal Government

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the 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
 See continuation sheet.
- other, explain
 See continuation sheet.

Edson H. Ball Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 9-8-11

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY

contributing	noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE / Theater = Movie Theater

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: VACANT / NOT IN USE

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
 WALLS BRICK, CONCRETE, STEEL
 ROOF STEEL, ASPHALT, GRAVEL
 OTHER

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-8)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Completed in March 1950, the Edna Theatre was constructed as a flagship location for the Long Theatre Company, which operated approximately sixty movie houses throughout central and south Texas.¹ Situated adjacent to important civic buildings, including the Jackson County Courthouse square and Edna City Hall, this movie palace was the focal point of entertainment for Jackson County residents for nearly three decades. Designed and constructed by Houston's W.D. Peck and Company, Inc., in the Moderne style, the Edna Theatre features an enormous vertical fin that announces the name of the venue in large, illuminated letters, as well as smaller fins and a large, curving marquee with multicolored neon lights cantilevered over the street corner. Currently vacant, local residents are actively pursuing the building's restoration. The Edna Theatre is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A for Entertainment / Recreation; and under Criterion C for Architecture. The period of significance begins with the building's completion in 1950 and ends in 1961, the current 50-year date for eligibility.

Setting

The Edna Theatre is prominently located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Ed Linn and Main streets (formerly Hackberry Street, then Texas Route 12, then U.S. 59, and now Loop 521) in downtown Edna, the seat of Jackson County, Texas. The theater building is adjacent to the long, rectangular public square, which is covered with a grass lawn and shaded by oak and pecan trees. The modernist Jackson County Courthouse (1954), a flat-roofed, two-story building of brick, stone, and concrete designed by F. Perry Johnson, is situated at the center-rear of the square, to the east of the theater across Ed Linn Street.

The Edna Theatre is an iconic fixture within the downtown commercial district, surrounded by smaller, two-story buildings of stone and brick, nearly all constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; these other commercial buildings feature colorful awnings that project over the city sidewalks. In contrast, the Moderne-style Edna Theatre features a vertical fin that towers over the courthouse and the downtown, announcing EDNA when illuminated at night, and serving as the focal point or visual anchor for the commercial district.

The streets of Edna were platted in 1882 as an orthogonal grid around a railroad line; as such, they run at a 45-degree angle to the points of a compass. The Edna Theatre is positioned so that patrons watching a film would be facing southwest. The building is rectangular in shape, however, its northeast corner is chamfered at a 45-degree angle so that the main entrance and marquee face true north.

¹ *Edna Herald*, Section 1, page 1; Edna Theatre grand opening program booklet.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 6

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Exterior

Designed and constructed by W.D. Peck and Company, Inc., of Houston, the Edna Theatre was touted as "the most glamorous of the movie palaces" belonging to the Long Theatres franchise of central and south Texas.²

The main entrance is brightly lit with neon, and mirrored panels under the marquee and surrounding the entrance doors reflect light to attract moviegoers. Set into the green-tiled north wall under the marquee are three sets of double doors of mahogany and glass with lower kickplates and long, curving door pulls made of steel. As the theater building was designed during the era of racial segregation, the main entrance reflects this social history: two double door entrances to the right of the ticket booth were for the use of white and Hispanic patrons, while the single set of double doors to the left of the ticket booth were for the use of African American moviegoers. Terrazzo tiles on the sidewalk form gray-and-white rays that extend outward from a central ticket booth toward the street, drawing in moviegoers to purchase tickets and enter the theater. The ticket booth is clad with ceramic tiles in a soft yellow, three inches square, accented by one border row of thin, three-inch-long black tiles. The upper façade over the marquee is clad with seven vertical porcelain panels that progress from shell pink, rose pink, mauve, to rust, and return through the hues back to shell pink.

The curving marquee cantilevers over the street corner, sheltering ticket buyers and those lingering before or after a screening; at night, the marquee edges are illuminated with overlapping rings of yellow neon. The tower over the marquee reaches sixty feet in height and proclaims EDNA in red-and-white neon letters, each five feet tall. Reminiscent of an idealized rocket ship, the porcelain-clad metal tower is mostly dark green, with its two progressively receding segments in lighter shades of green as it reaches toward the sky; at its point, the tower is encircled by a Saturn-like metal ring. At the base of the tower, where the sign connects to the building, segments recede in size and alternate in two shades of green as it points down toward the marquee; these lower segments are lit with red and green neon at night. The tower, marquee, and two vertical fins are brilliantly outlined in one mile of neon tubing in white, red, green, and yellow, allowing the building to attractively advertise itself even at a great distance.

To ground the building, so boldly marked by the towering vertical sign, emphasis is placed on its horizontality using decorative bands of concrete and brick. The building is best described as an asymmetrical one-part commercial block constructed of clay tile and steel frame, and clad in red Roman brick, with the taller theater space articulated in buff-colored standard brick. The northeast and northwest elevations feature bands of metal-framed display windows interrupted by metal-framed glass doors at the individual storefronts. A flat metal awning protrudes from these elevations at the tops of the windows and appears as a thin, continuous horizontal band that stretches across each façade. Above the awnings to the top of the parapet, the standard buff-colored brick is used to visually connect the storefronts to the central theater volume. The parapet wall is highest at the northeast end, and it steps down by one brick every eight to ten feet toward the northwest. A protruding stack of three short horizontal bands of concrete accentuates the top corners of the building on the elevations at Main and Ed Linn streets, and a concrete cap extends along the top of the chamfered corner at the main entrance on the north. Leading the viewer's eye down from this concrete cap to the storefronts are two vertical concrete fins, each pierced

² Grand opening program booklet.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 7

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

with three circles, which connect to the flat metal awnings, each approximately 6 inches deep by 36 inches long; at night the six circles are outlined in red neon. At the center of the northeast façade, a striated relief ornament extends vertically from the top of the awning to the top of the parapet, and it is executed in red brick to harmonize with the red brick below, yet contrast with the upper field of buff-colored brick, which is otherwise unornamented. The historic aluminum storefront windows are intact on the northeast façade, but the aluminum-and-glass storefront door and transom (located below and between the large relief ornament and the pierced concrete fin) has been replaced with a door with two panels in its lower half, and a three-over-three light window in its upper half.

At the time of the theater's opening in March 1950, the one-part commercial block on the northwest side of the building housed two businesses, a dress shop and a grocery store from the Piggly Wiggly chain. Today that commercial space houses a feed store, and its face brick has been painted gray to differentiate it from the rest of the building. Some store windows have been covered with wood, and the theater exit door on the northwest elevation has been replaced by a single, flush panel door.

Interior

The terrazzo tile outside the front entrance of the theatre continues inside, through the two sets of double doors, into the spacious lobby, which has a vaulted ceiling. On the left side of the lobby, a two-sided concessions area once included a popcorn machine and glass display cases with countertops for popcorn and candy sales; the two sides of the concessions counter accommodated sales to the segregated audiences. During the segregation period, African American patrons who entered through the single set of double doors could stop and purchase their candy and popcorn through a pass-through window on the left side of the counter, and continue straight ahead, up a narrow staircase to the second-floor balcony. On the right side of the lobby is a black-tiled wall from which two white porcelain water fountains are installed at different heights, to accommodate both adults and children. A cold drink machine—which automatically dispensed a cup full of ice and soda pop at the mere touch of a button—was located to the left of this black-tiled wall, and former patrons of the Edna Theatre fondly recall its novelty.³ Also on the right are the ladies' and men's restrooms, which were segregated during the building's early years, and a grand staircase to the balcony.

From the main lobby, moviegoers would ascend a slightly ramped, wide walkway that is still covered with the original deep red carpet, accented with a design of gold scrolls. Framing the hallway entrance at the top of the ramp are curtains of velvet-soft, black corduroy, trimmed in gold braid, which serve to block out the light and noise from the lobby and concessions area while the movie is playing. In the hallway, defined by an eight-foot-tall tiled wall on the left and a five-foot-tall upholstered wall on the right, a pair of columns marks each of the two entrances into the auditorium, which once held 800 seats. A stage—four feet tall and 450 square feet in area—stands at the center of the auditorium, above which is the projection screen. The ceiling of the auditorium is thirty feet tall and is slightly recessed from a sculptural, Moderne-styled section at its center; recessed neon lighting follows the flowing, sinuous curves behind this projecting central section, creating a softly glowing effect.

³ Author's interview with Nancy Simons.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 8

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Near the restrooms in the lobby is the grand staircase that leads to the 200-seat balcony, the projection room, and the manager's office. The stairs are covered in carpet, and the handrail on the left side of the staircase is made of extruded aluminum, with glassy panels of corrugated acrylic framed between the flat, unadorned aluminum posts. Former patrons recall one occasion in which the theater manager, intoxicated, fired a gun inside his office while a Roy Rogers and Dale Evans movie was playing, and bullets lodged in the metal door; oblivious to the sounds of gunshots, theater patrons watched the movie without interruption.⁴ Today, the projection room stands frozen in time, with gray canisters of movie reels ready to be threaded onto the projectors, one next to the other, just as they were on the night of the last screening. The two carbon arc Peerless projectors point down through the dusty window to the stage and screen below, awaiting sounds and actions that will again entertain the residents of Jackson County and the surrounding area.

The marquee was restored in 2008, and the building awaits further restoration. The integrity of the Edna Theatre is excellent, as it maintains a very high degree of its historic features and finishes on its exterior, and many interior details also remain. As the most prominent building in the downtown commercial district—eclipsing even the county courthouse—the Edna Theatre is nominated at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Entertainment / Recreation, and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, as an excellent example of an Art Moderne-inspired movie theater of the mid-twentieth century.

⁴ Author's interview with Joe Hermes.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

Property:

- A** is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** 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** has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS

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 has achieved significance within the past 50 years.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION; ARCHITECTURE
PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1950-1961
SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1950
SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A
CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A
ARCHITECT / BUILDER: W. D. Peck & Co., Inc., Houston, Texas

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-9 through 8-13)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheets 9-14 through 9-15)

- PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A
- 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 Texas Historical Commission, Austin
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 9

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Edna Theatre is adjacent to the county courthouse in the heart of downtown Edna, the seat of Jackson County, Texas. Between 1950 and 1978, the Edna Theatre served as an important focal point for the rural county, as “the picture show” was the most popular gathering place for young and old residents alike.⁵ Although the Edna Theatre was built to be the entertainment center for the county, it arrived just at the time when commercial television programming brought entertainment directly into people’s homes, and, consequently, its popularity waned until the theater closed after less than thirty years in service. Today, a group of residents who fondly recall the excitement of the movie palace is pursuing its restoration, hoping to return the building to its place as the social center for the community.

At the time of its opening on March 14, 1950, the Edna Theatre featured state-of-the-art technology and was the epitome of architectural style for a movie theater of its size. Contractor W.D. Peck & Company, Inc., of Houston, designed and constructed the Edna Theatre, which served as the flagship of the sixty theaters operated by the Long Theaters chain in central and south Texas. One thousand moviegoers could fill the single-screen auditorium and enjoy the same films being screened in larger cities around the country, and the theater was fully air-conditioned at a time when very few homes or businesses featured such comforts. The exterior and interior of the building still maintain their Moderne-styled details, including the elaborate marquee and vertical signage, brilliantly lit with multicolored neon, and its aluminum poster display cases and storefront windows. The Edna Theatre is nominated to the National Register, at the local level of significance, under Criterion A for Entertainment / Recreation, and under Criterion C for Architecture.

A Brief History of Edna, Jackson County, Texas⁶

Construction of the New York, Texas and Mexican (NYT&M) Railway line between the Texas towns of Rosenberg and Victoria began in September 1881, and it bypassed Texana, then the seat of Jackson County; consequently, the town of Edna was established along the railroad line in 1882. Laid out on land owned by Lucy Flournoy—who conveyed right-of-way and a half-interest in the townsite to the NYT&M—the town of Edna was named for a daughter of Joseph Telfener, owner of the railroad. Nicknamed the “Macaroni,” the NYT&M was constructed by Italian laborers, most of whom Telfener, himself an Italian immigrant, had brought from the Lombardy region. On July 4, 1882, the first train arrived in Edna. Gideon Egg was the first merchant to establish a business in Edna, having relocated his general merchandise store from Texana in 1882. Also in that year, a baby girl named Edna Louise Traylor was the first child born in the new community.

⁵ Author’s interviews with Joe Hermes, Roy Ortolon, and Brenda Novasad.

⁶ This section derived from Brownson Malsch, “Edna, Texas,” in *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed February 12, 2011, at: <<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hfe01>>; and Stephen L. Hardin, “Jackson County,” in *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed February 14, 2011, at: <<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcj02>>.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 10

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

In an election held on January 22, 1883, Jackson County residents voted to name Edna as the county seat. The contract to build a new county courthouse was awarded on February 11, 1884, and a post office opened in 1886. The congregation of the Texana Presbyterian Church moved its sanctuary, constructed in 1859, over eight miles to a new location in Edna, where it was used by other denominations for worship services; it is the oldest public building remaining in Jackson County, and it has been rehabilitated to serve the area as a cultural center.⁷ The *Jackson County Progress* was the town's first newspaper, but the printing plant, along with a large part of Edna's business district, was destroyed in 1906 in the town's second large fire. The *Edna Herald*, first published on November 22, 1906, succeeded the *Progress*.

The population of Edna steadily increased from 1,000 in 1896 to 2,500 residents by 1929, and by 1958—during the heyday of the Edna Theatre—an estimated 6,500 people lived in Edna. In addition to the county courthouse, today the city has a hospital, library, museum, city park with swimming pool, three banks, two savings and loan associations, a country club with a nine-hole golf course, and the retirement community of Oak Creek Village. Edna is the center of a prosperous agricultural area with petroleum and natural gas production and has an active chamber of commerce, oilfield service industries, and two grain elevators. The city is also the gateway to the 11,000-acre Lake Texana, which now covers the former site of Texana. After a decline in the late twentieth century, the population of Edna again slowly increased; in 1990 there were 5,343 residents, and in 2000 there were 5,899 residents of Edna. This number was slightly smaller (5,845) in September 2009.

Local Significance under Criterion A for Entertainment and Recreation

A single-screen movie theater—the Ed Tex—opened in Edna on Monday, June 30, 1930,⁸ and it served the community until a fire destroyed the building in 1942. Due to U.S. involvement in World War II and related shortages of construction materials and capital for investment, a new theater could not be built in replacement at that time. Between 1942 and the opening of the Edna Theatre in 1950, residents throughout the largely rural Jackson County attended movie screenings in Edna in a remodeled storefront building with very limited seating capacity.

Late in 1949, construction began on the Edna Theatre at the corner of Ed Linn and Main streets, and the movie palace—a spectacular in itself—opened on the evening of Tuesday, March 14, 1950. The theater was designed and constructed by W.D. Peck and Company, Inc., of Houston, for the movie theater chain of J.G. Long Theaters, Inc., of Bay City, Texas. The Long Theaters owned and operated sixty theater venues throughout central and south Texas at that time, and the Edna Theatre was as modern in its design and equipment as any of its theaters in larger metropolitan areas, including Dallas and Houston. In addition to the latest in projection and sound equipment, and the most eye-catching of marquee lighting and signage, the Edna Theatre featured “eighty tons of refrigeration [to] cool the theater in summer, and a large heating plant [to] make it equally as comfortable during the winter.”⁹ The

⁷ The Texana Presbyterian Church was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1981. A Greek Revival style wood frame building, it served as a church until 1908, when the congregation sold it.

⁸ “Edna Theatre Will Open June 30,” *El Campo News*, vol. 2, no. 35 (May 30, 1930).

⁹ “New Theater at Edna Is Opened,” *Victoria Advocate* (March 16, 1950), page unknown.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Victoria Advocate reported that the Edna Theatre “is as modern as one can be built at this time.”¹⁰ The final cost of construction exceeded \$200,000, a large sum for its day.¹¹

“With true carnival spirit,” approximately 3,000 people from Edna and the surrounding towns attended the grand opening of the theater on a Tuesday night. Jackson County residents celebrated the opening of the new movie palace with a parade, followed by a concert by the Edna Cowboy Band, conducted by R.J. Kluge. On the 450-square-foot stage in the single-screen auditorium, a short dedication ceremony was held, with L.O. Wallace of the Long Theatres chain acting as master of ceremonies; also in attendance was another Long employee, Glenn McClain, who briefly addressed the crowd. Harry Mauritz, the mayor of Edna, and Dr. R.E. Lee, president of the chamber of commerce, also spoke briefly, and Wallace introduced the audience of 1,000 to the manager of the new theater, Fred M. Smith. The first feature shown at the Edna Theatre was *Father Is a Bachelor*, starring William Holden and Coleen Gray; this romantic comedy, directed by Abby Berlin and Norman Foster, had just been released nationally on February 22, making its Edna debut on March 14 quite current.¹²

Many in Jackson County today fondly recall the vibrant atmosphere of the Edna Theatre and its significance as an important social center for the surrounding towns during the mid-twentieth century. Saturday matinees cost ten cents and included headline news clips, the latest adventures of a weekly serial hero, a cartoon, and one or two full-length feature films. Teenagers flocked to the Edna Theatre on Saturday nights, as “the picture show” was the best place to take a date; midnight screenings of horror films also were a popular attraction for teenagers on Saturdays. Local merchants helped to bring patrons to the movie theater on Tuesdays, when people would queue all the way down the block for giveaways; the merchants donated prizes that were awarded to the lucky holders of numbered ticket stubs, or owners of cars with license plate numbers drawn by lottery. Treats at the concessions stand included popcorn for ten cents, candy for five cents, and dill pickles from a one-gallon jar. The Edna Theatre stage also was used for high school plays and talent shows, and occasionally live entertainment was also provided before a movie on Saturday night.¹³

Although attendance at the Edna Theatre was very strong in its first years of operation, the opening of the theater coincided with the rise of television’s popularity among American households, and over time the number of moviegoers dwindled as the number of television sets rose. The later development of television-related technologies—including home video cassette players and recorders in the mid-1970s, and the introduction of cable or “pay” television channels—also contributed to the eventual demise of the Edna Theatre. Throughout the United States, large single-screen theaters like the Edna, located in the heart of downtown, commonly fell victim to the rising popularity of multi-screen theaters associated with shopping centers and regional malls. The Edna eventually succumbed to these pressures and closed its doors in 1978.¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Edna Herald*, March 9, 1950, section 1, page 1.

¹² “New Theater at Edna Is Opened,” *Victoria Advocate*, March 16, 1950, no page.

¹³ Author’s interviews with Roy Ortolon and Sue Quinn.

¹⁴ Author’s interviews with William Moore and Callaway Vance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 12

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Local Significance under Criterion C for Architecture

The local newspaper claimed that the Edna Theatre was “the largest and most modern [movie theater] between San Antonio and Houston.”¹⁵ Larger in size than many other single-screen theaters of the Long Theatres chain—including the Grove Theatre in Dallas, Dallas County, and the Ganado Theatre in Ganado, also in Jackson County—the Edna Theatre was certainly the chain’s most opulent venue in 1950. Designed in the popular Moderne style, the building was the epitome of glamour and excitement, suggestive of Hollywood itself.

The horizontality of the one-part commercial block, which includes several storefronts and a grocery store, is countered with the two-story volume that contains the 1,000-seat auditorium and its screen. Minimal decoration on the brick building allows the elaborate theater marquee and 60-foot-tall vertical signage to serve as both advertisement and the focus of ornamentation. Extensive neon lighting both inside and outside the theater, including more than one mile of neon tubing on the main façade alone, draws attention to building in the dark of night, even at considerable distance. Texas architectural historian Jay C. Henry claimed that the “Streamlined marquee and the neon-illuminated advertising beacon became the leitmotifs of [1930s] modernization,” on the major thoroughfares of downtown, a pattern that continued in the postwar years in the smaller towns of Texas.¹⁶ Henry identifies “the suspended electric sign [that] has now become a vertical advertising pylon of monumental scale” as the dominating feature of movie theaters constructed throughout the state during this period, “the building as billboard—as an immediately recognizable trademark and advertisement for the goods and services purveyed.”¹⁷

The Edna Theatre is one of the finer examples of a Moderne-style movie palace still extant in southeast Texas. Its integrity is excellent, as its elaborate signage, ticket booth, poster display cases, and entrances all remain in place and unchanged. The adjacent storefronts still feature their aluminum-framed display windows and their continuous bands of metal awnings, which were designed to be fireproof. The interior of the theater still includes the stage, screen, and sculptural ceiling ornamentation. The Moderne railing of extruded aluminum with glassy panels of corrugated, clear acrylic still graces the interior staircase to the balcony and manager’s office.

A group of local businessmen, seeking to save the building from demolition and restore it to its former glory, purchased the Edna Theatre in 1986.¹⁸ These owners, in conjunction with the Jackson County Historical Commission, restored the marquee and most of the exterior neon lighting at a cost of nearly \$30,000, much of which came from contributions from the community. In June 2008, nearly 1,200 people attended the marquee relighting ceremony, and since then the neon lights and signage have been illuminated every night between 9 and 11 o’clock.¹⁹ The City of Edna and the Chamber of Commerce now rent the marquee for public and private messages, and the Texana Arts Council, a local non-profit group, is currently pursuing full restoration and reuse of the Edna Theatre.

¹⁵ *Edna Herald*, March 9, 1950, section 1, page 1.

¹⁶ Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas, 1895-1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 234.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 235-236.

¹⁸ Author’s interview with Joe Hermes.

¹⁹ Author’s interview with Roy Ortolon.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 13

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

For its important role as a social center for Jackson County for nearly thirty years, providing entertainment for residents throughout the area, the Edna Theatre is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for Entertainment/Recreation, at the local level of significance. As one of the finest examples of a Moderne-styled single-screen movie theater in southeast Texas, the Edna Theatre is also nominated to the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture. The period of significance begins in 1950 and continues through 1961, the current fifty-year mark for historic resources, in accordance with National Register guidelines.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 14

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Digital Sanborn Maps. "Edna, September, 1949." Proquest, LLC. Environmental Data Resources, 2008.
<http://sanborn.umi.com/HelpFiles>.

"Edna Theatre Will Open June 30." *El Campo News*, vol. 2, no. 35 (May 30, 1930), page not known.

"Grand Opening of Long's New Edna Theatre. Dedicated to the Edna Cowboys. Edna, Texas. March 14, 1950."
Program booklet in possession of Jackson County Historical Commission, Edna, Texas.

Hardin, Stephen L. "Jackson County," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed February 14, 2011, at:
<<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcj02>>.

Hauschild, Henry. "Telfener, Joseph," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed February 14, 2011, at:
<<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fte07>>.

Henry, Jay C. *Architecture in Texas, 1895-1945*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.

Heritage Quest Online. "Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930. United States Federal Census Bureau.
Department of Commerce - Bureau of the Census. www.heritagequestonline.com.

Jackson County Deed Records, Record Book K, p. 137, 1882.

Longstreth, Richard. *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. Washington,
D.C.: Preservation Press, 1987.

Malsch, Brownson. "Edna, Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed February 12, 2011 at:
<<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hfe01>>.

"New Long Theatre in Edna Will Open Tuesday Evening." *Edna Herald* (March 9, 1950), sec. 1, p. 1.

"New Theater at Edna Opened." *Victoria Advocate* (March 16, 1950), page not known.

Walsh, W.C. Commission of the General Land Office of the State of Texas. 1880 Map of Jackson County.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 15

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Interviews conducted by Frank Condron in Edna, Texas. Notes in possession of Frank Condron.

Hermes, Joe Dale. Mayor of Edna, Texas; co-owner of the nominated property. April 2006.

Milby, Mike. Lifetime resident of Edna. April, 2006.

Moore, William. Lifetime resident of Edna. April, 2010.

Novasad, Brenda Gail. Lifetime resident of Edna; member of Jackson County Historical Commission and Daughters of the Revolution of Texas (DRT). April, 2006.

Ortolon, Roy Charles. Lifetime resident of Edna; President, Texana Arts Council. April, 2006.

Quinn, Sue. Lifetime Resident of Edna; member, Jackson County Historical Commission and DRT. April, 2006.

Simons, Nancy. Lifetime resident of Edna; member, Jackson County Historical Commission. October, 2010.

Vance, Callaway. Lifetime resident of Edna; retired attorney. April 2006.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: 0.24 acre

UTM REFERENCES

<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
14	729180	3207765

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: Block 100, Lot 100x87FT-18.48x51.66FT-26x33.48FT, Edna, Texas

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: Nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

11. FORM PREPARED BY (with assistance from Rachel Leibowitz, Historian, Texas Historical Commission)

NAME / TITLE: Frank P. Condron, Chair

ORGANIZATION: Jackson County Historical Commission

DATE: March 14, 2011

STREET & NUMBER: 701 Progress

TELEPHONE: (361) 782-6733

CITY OR TOWN: Edna

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 77957

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheet Map-16 through Map-21)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-32 through Photo-49)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure-22 through Figure-31)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: The Picture Show Partnership (Joe D. Hermes, Trustee)

STREET & NUMBER: 802 Allen

TELEPHONE: (361) 782-3529

CITY OR TOWN: Edna

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 77957

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section MAP Page 16

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Map 1. Aerial photo of downtown Edna, Texas, with the Edna Theatre circled.
North is to the top of the frame.
Taken from Google Earth, February 14, 2011.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

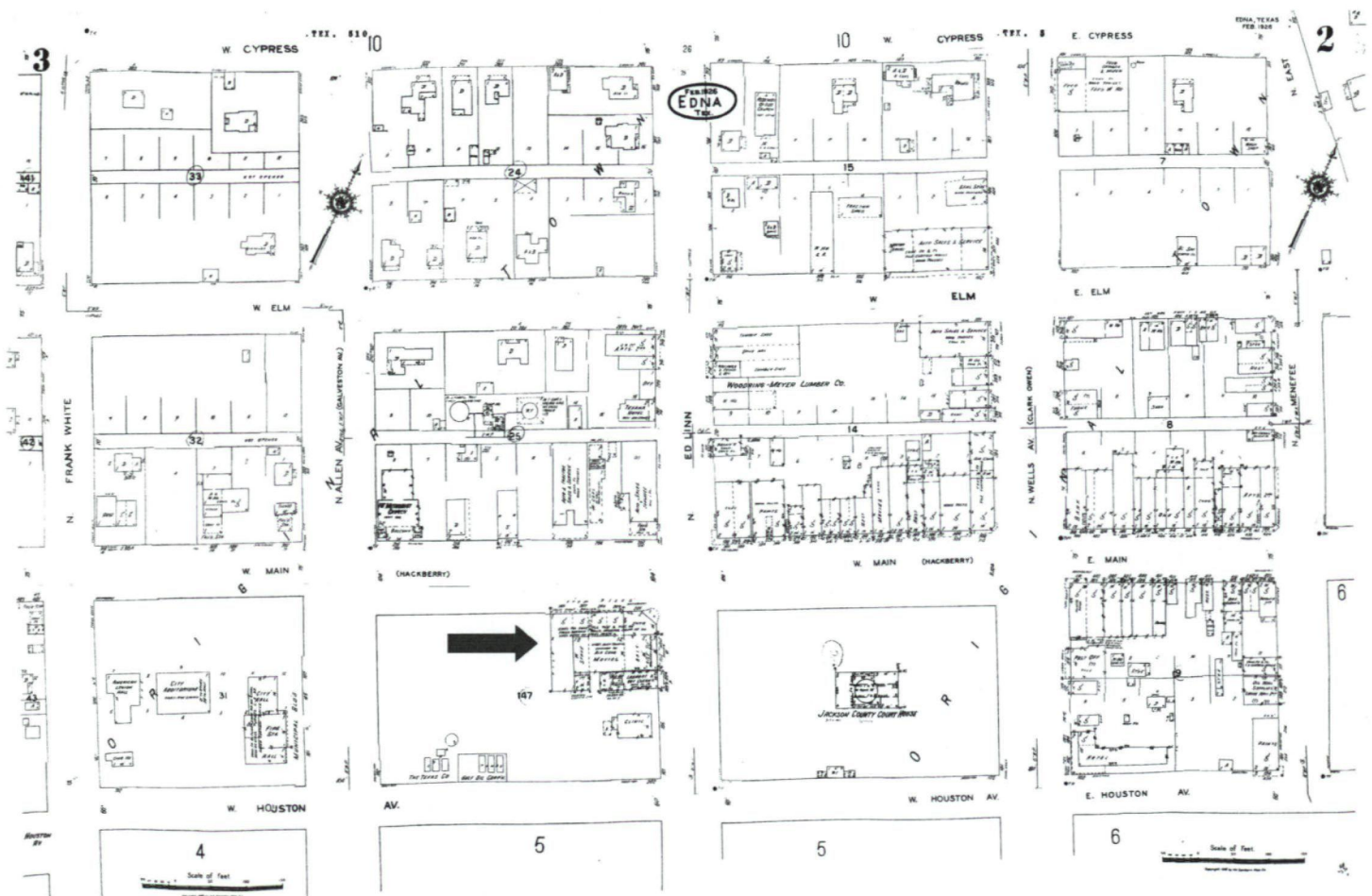
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section MAP Page 17

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Map 2. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map of Edna, Texas, February 1926, revised September 1949.

Sheets 2 and 3 are combined to show relationship of the Edna Theatre (arrow) to the west of the Jackson County Courthouse square and the downtown commercial district.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

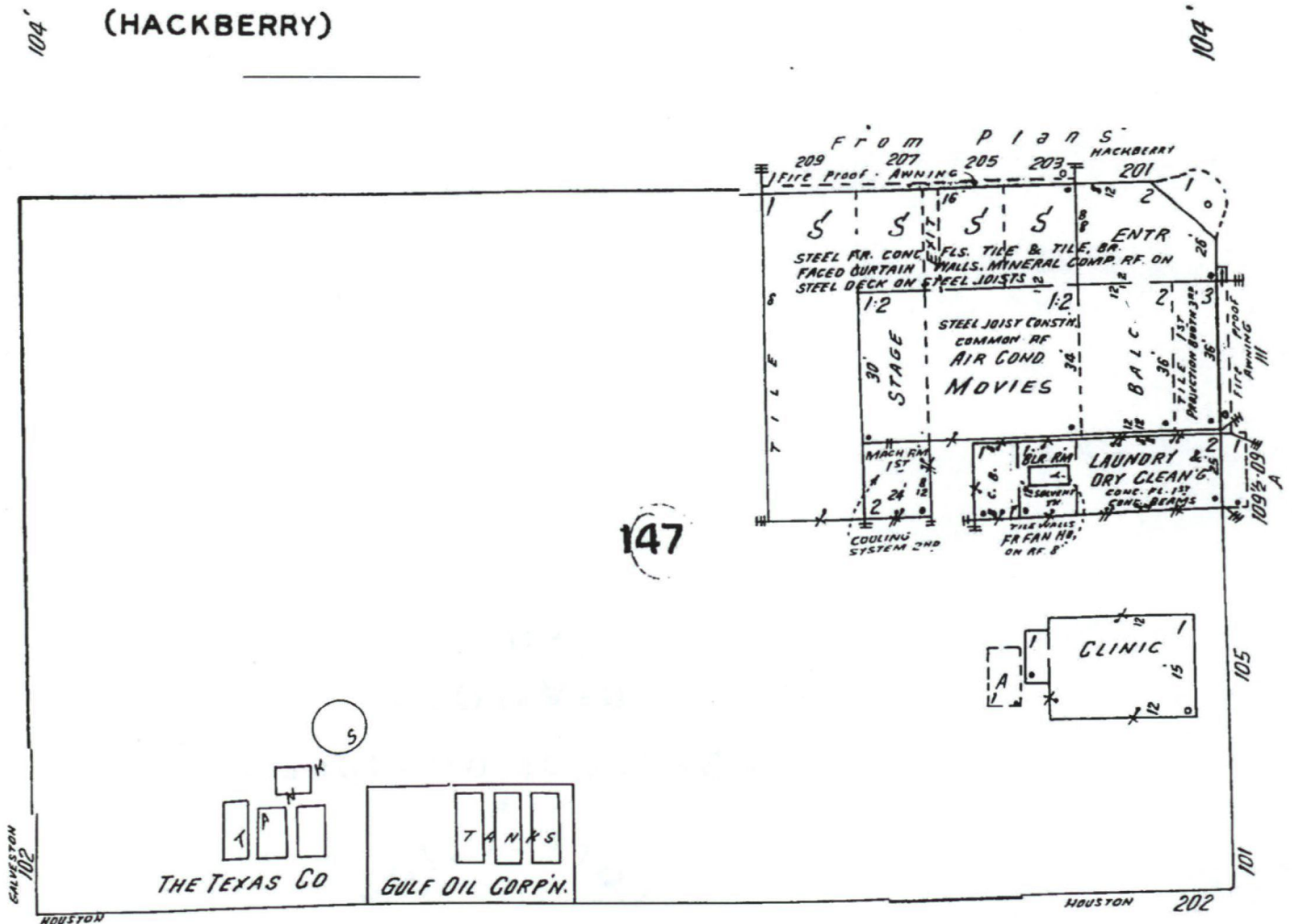
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section MAP Page 18

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Map 3. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map, detail of Sheet 3.

February 1926, revised September 1949. As construction of the Edna Theatre building was just beginning, the map is marked "from plans." This map shows one extra storefront, which was not completed. See the electrical plan (Figure 1).



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 19

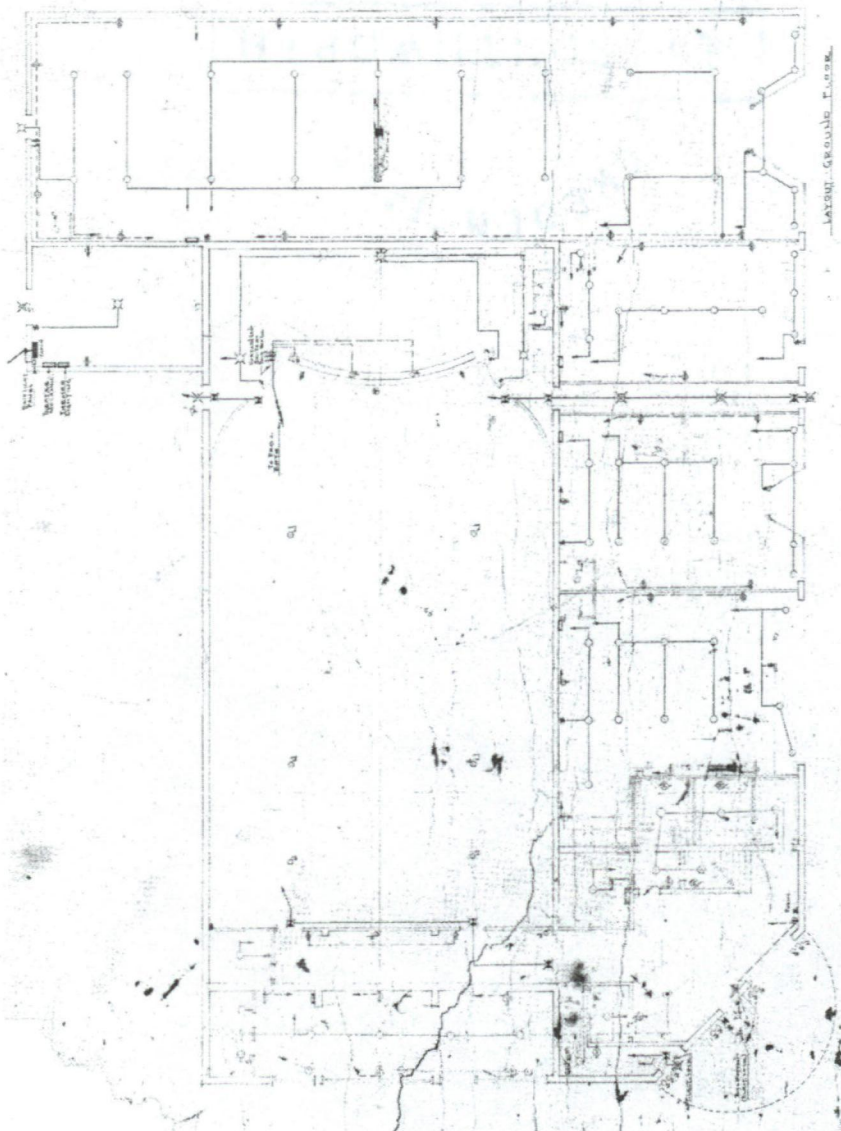
Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Figure 1. "J.G. Long's Theatre and Store Bldg., Edna, Texas."

Entrances are at lower right of drawing, and chamfered corner faces true north.

Storefronts are to the right side, grocery store is perpendicular at rear.

Electrical plan, ground floor, Sheet 10, June 13, 1950. Not signed or stamped.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 20

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Figure 2. Edna Theatre, 1950.

Note the Piggly Wiggly grocery store at the far end of the commercial block.

Photo courtesy of the Texana Arts Council.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

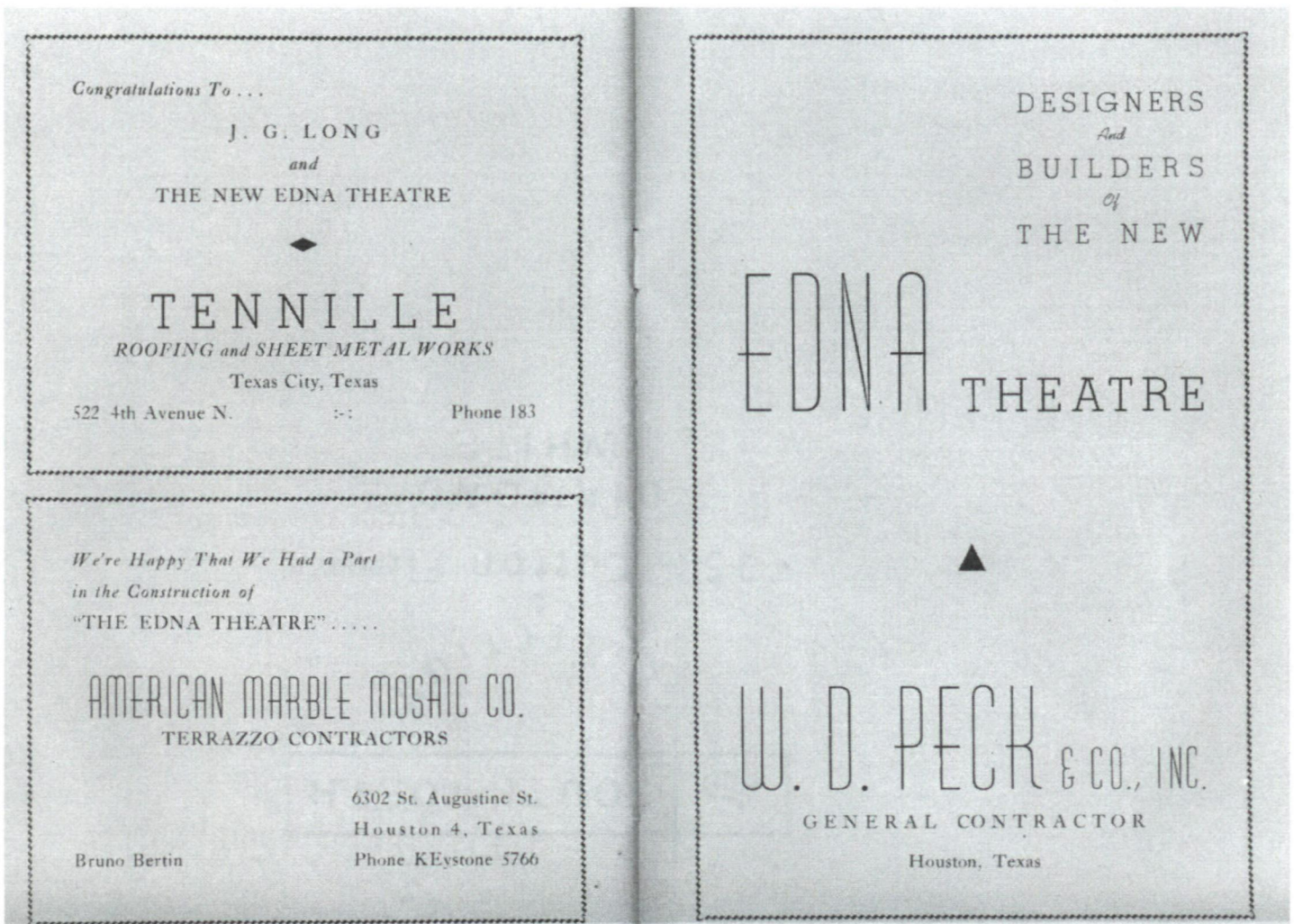
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 21

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Figure 3. Pages from the Edna Theatre’s grand opening program, Tuesday, March 14, 1950, with advertisements from contractors involved in the building’s construction.

Program courtesy of the Texana Arts Council.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 22

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Figure 4. Mayor Harry Mauritz takes the stage at the grand opening of the Edna Theatre, Tuesday, March 14, 1950.

Photograph courtesy of the Texana Arts Council.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 23

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Figure 5. The northeast elevation of the Edna Theatre, looking toward the southwest from the courthouse square, after a rare snowfall in February 1958.

Photograph courtesy of Barbara Holley.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 24

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Figure 6. Photographs taken under the Edna Theatre marquee, in front of the ticket booth. The child in the cowboy outfit was the winner of a girl's bicycle.

Photographs courtesy of the Texana Arts Council.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 25

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Figures 7a and 7b. The Long Theatres operated other single-screen theaters that were not as grand as the Edna Theatre, including the Grove in Pleasant Grove (now Dallas), Dallas County; and the Ganado in Ganado, Jackson County. The Ganado was recently restored.

Photograph of the Ganado taken by John Stewart on February 18, 2011; accessed on Flickr at:
<<http://www.flickr.com/photos/12335678@N00/5462508918/in/set-72157618071758065>>.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 26

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Figure 8. The side stairway to the balcony, for the use of African American patrons during the segregation era.

Historically, their access to the two-sided concessions stand in the lobby would have been just inside the door at the foot of the stairs, through the pass-through window to the left.

Photograph by Roy Ortolon, March 19, 2011.



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section PHOTO Page 27

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Figure 9 The balcony, with historic seats still in place, waiting to be restored.

Photograph by Roy Ortolon, March 19, 2011.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

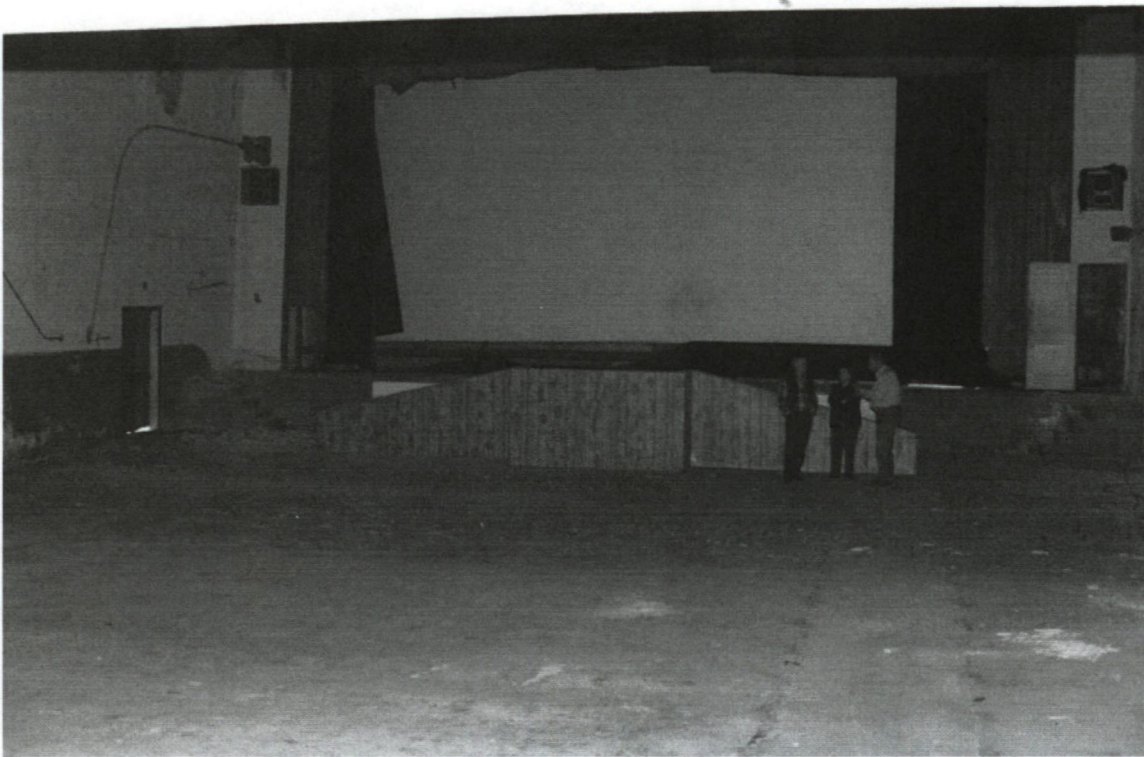
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 28

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Figure 10. Looking toward the movie screen and stage. A removable wood platform blocks the the historic stage.

Photograph by Roy Ortolon, March 19, 2011.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 29

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas
Photographed by Roy Ortolon
Location of digital files: Texas Historical Commission, Austin

Photograph 1
View of the northwest side of the Edna Theatre, which faces Main Street.
Camera facing southeast
March 7, 2010.

Photograph 2
View looking directly south at the main entrance of the Edna Theatre.
March 7, 2010.

Photograph 3
View of the northeast side of the Edna Theatre, which faces the Jackson County Court House.
Camera facing southwest
March 7, 2010.

Photograph 4
View of the southeast side of the Edna Theatre, showing abutting buildings.
Camera facing northeast
March 7, 2010.

Photograph 5
View of the southeast side of the south corner of the Edna Theatre, showing where an original utility abutment has been demolished.
Camera facing northeast
March 7, 2010.

Photograph 6
View of the southwest side of the Edna Theatre, showing adjacent building.
Formerly occupied by the Piggly Wiggly grocery store chain, now in use as a feed store.
Camera facing northeast
March 7, 2010.

Photograph 7
Interior view. Looking up at ceiling with recessed neon lighting.
Camera facing southwest
June 20, 2008.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 30

Edna Theatre
Edna, Jackson County, Texas

Photograph 8
Interior view. Looking toward the balcony and projection booth.
Camera facing northeast
June 20, 2008.

Photograph 9
Interior view. Staircase with extruded aluminum handrail, filled with corrugated panels of clear acrylic.
Camera facing southeast
June 20, 2008.

Photograph 10
Celebration of the relighting of the Edna Theatre marquee.
Camera facing southwest
June 30, 2008.

Photograph 11
Celebration of the relighting of the marquee.
Camera facing southwest
June 30, 2008.

Photograph 12
Marquee detail, Celebration of the relighting of the marquee.
Camera facing southwest
June 30, 2008.

Photograph 13
Historic entry/exit for African-American patrons
Camera facing northwest, downstairs
June 30, 2008.

Photograph 14
Historic stairway to balcony for African-American patrons
Camera facing southeast, upstairs
June 30, 2008.

Photograph 15
Interior, looking towards screen
Camera facing northeast
June 30, 2008.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Edna Theatre
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Jackson

DATE RECEIVED: 7/29/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/24/11
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/08/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/13/11
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000652

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 9.8.11 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



EDNA

CANADO VALENTINES DAY
MORNING & AFTERNOON

SHOP
at
HOME

Hand Made
in the U.S.A.

WINDY

Edna Thestor
Edna, Jackson Co. TN
photo 1



EDNA

HAPPY 1ST BIRTHDAY
LINDSAY LYNN PITTMAN
LOVE GRANDMA & GRANDPA B
CARLO VALENTINES
DAY

SUNSHINE

PAPER STORE

AMERICAN

Edna Theator
Edna, Jackson Co
photo 2



Celebrations
MULTIMEDIA & PARTY RENTALS

EDNA

LONG
COURT
10-20

Edna Theater
Edna, Jackson Co. TX
3



Edna Theater
Edna, Jackson Co. TX
photo 4



Edna Theater
Edna, Jackson Co. TX
photo 5

E
D
N

Tar
& Ant
CA



Classic
Success Is In Your Hands
1-800-650-1904
classicrgpa.com

RATTLER
NOTHING COMES CLOSE



Edna Theatee

Edna, Jackson Co. TN

photo 6



Edna Theater
Edna, Jackson Co. TX
photo 7



Edna Theater
Edna, Jackson Co. T
Photo 8



↑ Lobby
ceiling
only

Edna Theater
Edna, Jackson Co. TX
photo 9

**LIGHTING UP A MEMORY
WELCOME TO EDNA
JUNE 30 2008**



Edna Theater
Edna, Jackson Co. T
photo 10



LIGHTING UP A MEMORY
WELCOME TO EDNA
JUNE 30 2008

Edna Theater

Edna, Jackson Co. T

photo 11

**E
D
N
A**

**LIGHTING UP A MEMORY
WELCOME TO EDNA
JUNE 30 2008**

Edna Theater
Edna, Jackson Co. TX
photo 12



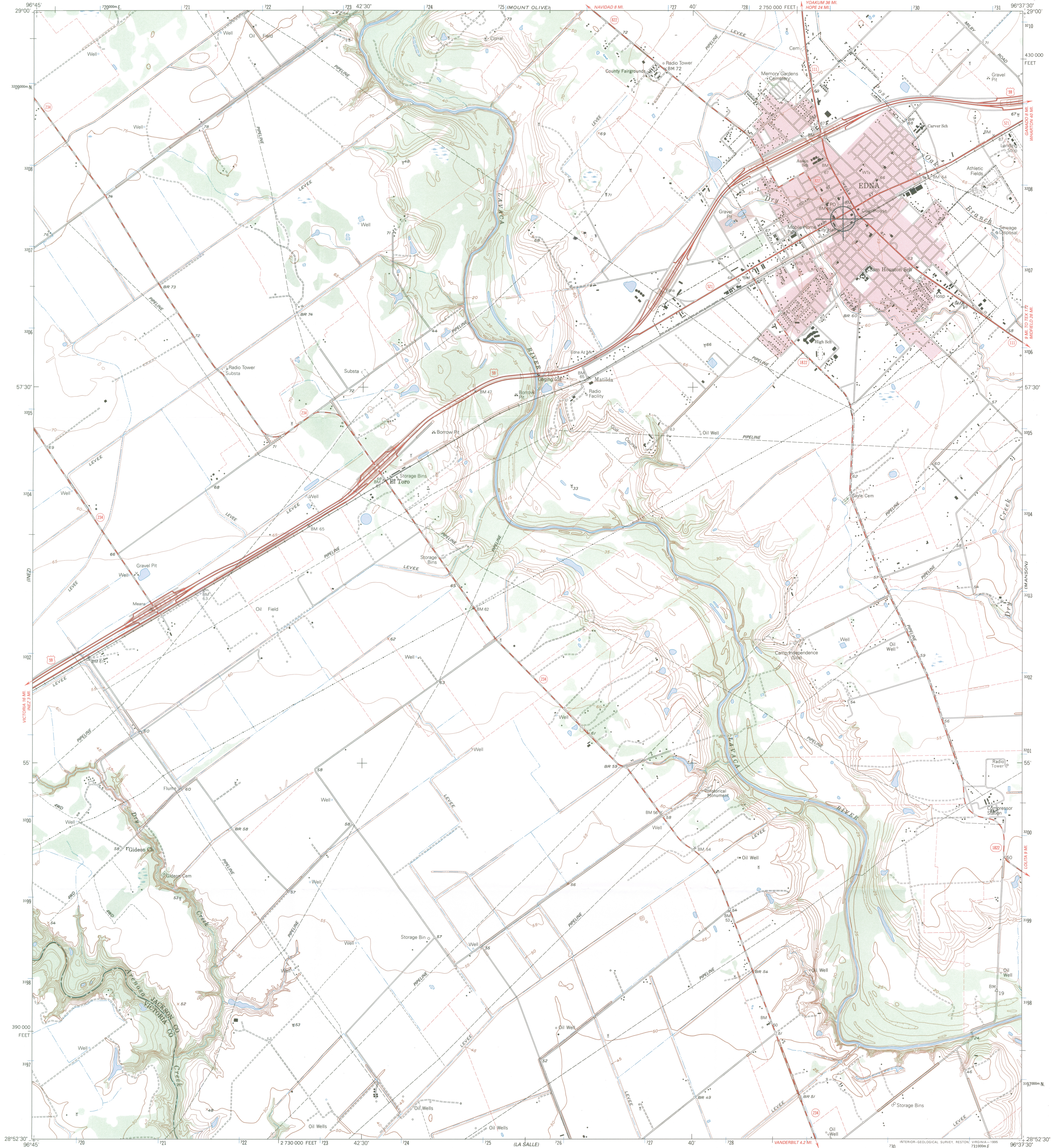
Edna Theater
Edna, Jackson Co. TX
photo 13



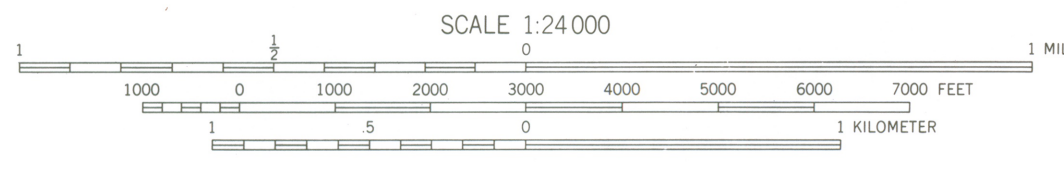
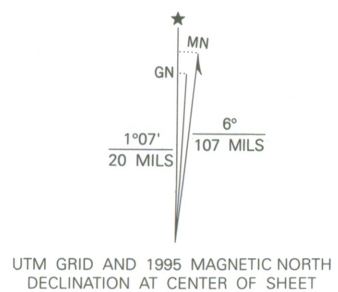
Edna Theater
Edna, Jackson Co. T
photo 14



Edna Theater
Edna, Jackson Co. TX
photo 15



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Compiled from aerial photographs taken 1946-1947. Revised from aerial
photographs taken 1991 and other sources. Field checked 1992
Map dated 1995
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and
10 000-foot ticks: Texas Coordinate System, south central zone
(Lambert Conformal Conic)
Blue 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator ticks, zone 14
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed
corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83
for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic
Survey NADCON software
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs



CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route



EDNA, TX
28096-H6-TF-024

1995

DMA 6641 1 NW-SERIES V882



EDNA THEATRE
EDNA, JACKSON CO., TX 729180E 320765N

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories



TO: Linda McClelland
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Gregory W. Smith, National Register Coordinator
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Edna Theatre, Edna, Jackson County, Texas

DATE: July 22, 2011

- The following materials regarding Edna Theatre are submitted:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Original National Register of Historic Places form
<input type="checkbox"/>	_ Resubmitted nomination
<input type="checkbox"/>	Multiple Property Documentation form
<input type="checkbox"/>	_ Resubmitted form
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Photographs printed from digital files
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gold CD with TIFF photograph files
<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographs printed from negatives
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	USGS map
<input type="checkbox"/>	Correspondence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

COMMENTS:

- SHPO requests substantive review (cover letter from SHPO attached)
- The enclosed owner objections (do) (do not) constitute a majority of property owners
- Other:

