1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: MAJESTIC THEATRE

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 230 East Houston Street Not for publication: ____

City/Town: San Antonio Vicinity: ____

State: TX County: Bexar Code: ____ Zip Code: 78205

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: ___
Public-local: X
Public-State: ___
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District: ___
Site: ___
Structure: ___
Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

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

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of related multiple property listing:

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register _____
____ Determined eligible for the _____
National Register
____ Determined not eligible for the _____
National Register
____ Removed from the National Register _____
____ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Recreation and Culture	Sub:	Theater
Current:	Recreation and Culture	Sub:	Theater Music facility Auditorium
	Commerce/trade		Business

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:
Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals
Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

MATERIALS:

Foundation:	Concrete
Walls:	Brick
Roof:	Concrete (gypsum)
Other:	Cast Stone (trim); Concrete (marquee); Cast-iron (marquee).

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Majestic Theatre opened in June, 1929, as the flagship house of the Interstate Amusement Company chain. It closed briefly in early 1930, but was in continual operation from that date until the late 1970s, when it went dark for two years. It reopened in 1981 as a venue for touring Broadway shows and has been in almost continuous use since.

The theater was built as a part of a 15-story office building, capped by a three-story residential penthouse. The theater occupies parts of the first six floors of the office building.

Originally, the theater had 3700 seats, making it the largest in Texas. In addition to the orchestra level, there are two balconies. The second balcony was designated for black patrons and was served by a separate lobby and elevator located on the opposite side of the block from the main entrance. Use of this balcony was discontinued about 1960. There are plans to restore and reopen it with a larger lobby on the sixth floor of the office building.

The theater was designed by Chicago architect John Eberson. Interior decoration was done by Michelangelo Studios, an Eberson family enterprise. Construction, including demolition of the existing building, excavation for the full basement, and interior decoration, was completed in thirteen months. The theater was the first publicly-accessible building in San Antonio to be air-conditioned.

The Majestic was designed as a combination movie/vaudeville house. Consequently, the stage is shallow, only 27 feet, and wing space is minimal. Dressing rooms were limited, occupying the basement area under the stage. There was a full orchestra pit and an organ, still in place but not functioning.

The principal facade is that of the office building. Except for the marquee and ornamental ticket kiosk, the theater is not architecturally elaborate on the exterior. Exterior walls are of solid brick or of brick with clay tile back-up. The brick facade is trimmed with cast stone. The structural frame of the theater is of steel, with major columns and beams encased in concrete fireproofing. The foundation consists of large, spread concrete footings. The roof framing of the theater is of very deep, but lightweight, steel trusses. The roof deck is gypsum plank.

The marquee is of architecturally-formed concrete carried on steel columns with ornamental cast iron covers. Interior partitions are of clay tile finished with plaster. Virtually all interior surfaces of the theater are plaster.

The exterior appearance of the Majestic Theatre is much as it was in 1929. The marquee is in its original configuration except for the reader board. The original board, using hundreds of light bulbs, was replaced with a similar-scaled board, internally lit

by fluorescent tubes and with neon trim, in the 1940s. A gigantic electric rooftop sign, visible for 30 miles, was removed in the 1950s.

The entrance doors are original, as is the marble and cast iron ticket kiosk. The old segregated entrance on College Street consists of a mini-version of the Houston Street marquee and ticket kiosk. This is presently not used, though funds are being raised to restore and reopen it.

The most significantly altered space in the theater is the outer lobby. A plaster and mosaic tile fountain, in the form of a baroque architectural niche, was destroyed in the 1940s for installation of a concession stand. The centerpiece of this fountain, a bronze sculpture by Harriet Frishmuth, remains. A large aquarium with a highly ornamental plaster surround was also replaced by a concession stand. The aquarium has been returned to its original location with a simplified plaster surround in the form of the original.

With these exceptions, the lobby appears as originally built with a mosaic tile floor, plaster vaults with painted canvas insert panels, plaster walls, and metal-and-glass chandeliers. The paint color scheme is original.

The inner lobby is minimal in size and rises through the second lobby level in an elliptical form. Originally, orchestra level seats extended halfway under the elliptical rotunda; these have been removed to increase the lobby area. The only separation between the inner lobby and the house was a half-height almost to the ceiling, with glass panels. The original wood rail is presently not in place but is stored awaiting restoration.

Architecturally, the lobby spaces have a rather dark, Mediterranean baroque feeling. The detailing of the two-story rotunda of the inner lobby has a Churrigueresque quality--a lavishly ornamented, Spanish, 18th century Baroque style. The brilliance of Eberson's atmospheric design concepts, however, are fully realized only upon entering the auditorium. This is one of Eberson's best.

In an atmospheric theatre, one is made to feel out of doors while inside. Entering the auditorium from the lobby-an architecturally treated interior space--the ceiling dissolves to a vaulted blue sky and the side walls become architectural compositions. At the Majestic, the architecture is Spanish/Moorish baroque with towers, turrets, arches, brackets, corbels, twisted columns, straight columns, balconies, oriels, windows, fountains, vine-covered latticework, grillwork, tilework, figurative sculpture, and much more. Though the two sidewalls are completely different there is a remarkable coherence to the assemblage of details. The proscenium, carried on heroic twisted columns, is an extravaganza of scalloped forms, architectural elements, potted palms, putti, and vegetable swags.

Every stop is pulled out to enhance the illusion of an exotic outdoor scene. The "sky" is not a true dome but a flat ceiling with large-radius curves down into the side walls. Electric stars, supposedly in astronomically accurate compositions, twinkle. Special effects projectors sweep wispy cloud patterns across the ceiling, optically correcting for the flat-and-curved ceiling planes. Trees, shrubs, flowering plants, and vines abound. Birds perch on architectural elements or are frozen in flight.

The use of plaster on the interior is unrelenting. If it looks like stone, wood, tile, or metal, it is really plaster. Even the twisted "iron" bars used as braces in coffered ceilings are plaster. The craftsmanship is astonishing. "Stone," "wood," and "metal" surfaces are unfailingly accurate. Though generally composed of precast elements, much of which was reputedly ordered from catalogs, continuity of line and curve are meticulously maintained.

The house has very much the appearance that it had at its 1929 opening. The original carpet has been replicated, as has the seat upholstery. Seating end stanchions have been repainted in the original color scheme. The seats themselves have been rebuilt using mostly original pieces. The grand drape and lambriquin replicate the originals in color and pattern.

The greatest visual change is the restored intensity and vibrance of the original paint color scheme. Those who remember the theater from the recent past, with its dun and dusty colors, even a dusty blue sky, are somewhat taken aback. Because the original polychrome scheme was done completely in tempera (70 feet or more above the floor), cleaning using solvents was not possible. All decorative surfaces were vacuumed and brushed, then repainted using partially loaded brushes dragged across the rough plaster surfaces.

The original foliage was beyond salvage and was replaced with new synthetic plant materials compatible in scale with the originals. Birds were replaced one for one, though with some changes in species. Original light fixtures were rewired and repainted, and replicated where missing. Cloud machines were replaced with updated products by the Austrian manufacturer of the originals.

Lobbies on the upper floors are very close to their original appearance. Decorative plaster surfaces have been repainted as in the house, lighting restored, and carpet replaced to match the original. Unfortunately, most of the antique furniture gathered by Eberson to furnish the lobbies has been lost.

Restroom and similar support areas have been updated for code compliance and convenience. The dressing rooms have been completely rebuilt. New chillers, boilers, and pumps have been installed. However, it was determined that the original air handling units could not be improved upon in terms of efficiency of operation and low noise levels.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A___ B___ C X D___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A___ B___ C___ D___ E___ F___ G___

NHL Criteria: 4

NHL Theme(s): XVI. Architecture
M. Period Revivals
2. Spanish (Mission)

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1929-1942

Significant Dates:

Significant Person(s):

Cultural Affiliation:

Architect/Builder: John Eberson (1875-1954)

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Majestic Theatre is one of the few remaining atmospheric/fantasy palaces in the United States. It is one of the most remarkable, faithfully restored theaters in the Southwest.

The great movie palaces gradually replaced Burlesque as entertainment within everyone's reach, rich and poor alike. In the 1920s and 1930s, the picture palace flourished, in big cities and small towns, as fantasy worlds into which anyone could escape for a few hours. When the boom was over, it left remnants of this glittering age across America and a handfull have been reused and restored--the Atlanta Fox, Columbus' Ohio Theater, Detroit's Fox Theater, Milwaukee's Pabst Theater, and two great Art Deco halls, the Paramount in Oakland and New York's Radio City Music Hall. They are all National Historic Landmarks. There are several other restorations that should be noted, but San Antonio's Majestic is the finest surviving Atmospheric theater by the masters of that style, the Ebersons.

The theater was designed by John Eberson and built in 1929 for the Interstate Theatre Amusement Company.

By 1928, Eberson and his son Drew, who joined him as a partner in 1926, had already designed atmospheric theaters in many parts of the country, many of them for (Karl) Hoblitzelle. Although Hoblitzelle purchased property in San Antonio as early as 1911, it was not on his own property that the new, Greater Majestic was built. The land he leased for the office building-theatre complex was owned by J.M. Nix, who purchased it from the Enterprise Company of Dallas in 1920. There was a covenant running with the land stating "that neither aforesaid land nor any building or improvement or any part hereon shall be used or occupied for theatrical, motion picture or amusement purposes at any time prior to April 5, 1928." However, the 1929 opening of the Majestic exceeded that time limit.

After the lease was finalized, Eberson's plans were accepted and contracts were sought for the $3,000,000 building. It was the largest theatre in the south with a seating capacity of 4,000. The local contract firm of Walsh and Burney, Inc., was selected for the project and Otto Johnson was picked as the local architectural representative. Building began immediately. By June 8, 1929, final touches were put on the theater. Debris was removed from the site, last minute pointing was done, carpet and tile installations were complete, and antique furniture and statuary were moved into place. Hanging the sign on the building's front drew a crowd of hundreds who watched the enormous beacon as it was put in place by a group of workmen.

The opening of the building had a special significance in addition to its theatrical functions. In many ways, it was a symbol of newness, of a progressiveness which San Antonio wished to identify with. This was evident in the opening ceremonies which marked the beginning of "Prosperity Month" in the city. The celebration, largely centered around the Greater Majestic, would "commemorate the era of progress and development that has occurred in this state in recent years." This festival would supposedly draw as many as 500,000 visitors to the city due in part to "reduced railroad fares" in local as well as statewide areas.

... A banquet was held the night of its opening during which prominent citizens and other notable guests praised the accomplishments of the city as well as the new theater. The chief of Staff of the Mexican government, General Tapia, was an honored guest at opening day ceremonies....

Profits from the opening night performance were to be donated to the Children's Hospital Fund, a special project of the San Antonio Junior League. By June 12, two days before the new theater's opening, this group had raised $15,000 through ticket sales. By opening night this amount had risen to $25,000, $5,000 above the expected goal. There was a separation of the profits of the sales which reflected life in the twenties, not only in San Antonio, but in the entire country. The money was divided by theater section with profits from the white section going to the Children's Hospital and those from the black section distributed to the Orphanage and the Campfire Girls.

Advance publicity heralded the opening of the theater and special articles appeared in the June 9, 1929 issue of the San Antonio Express. Headlines of one article symbolized the hyperbole lavished on the opening theater in this way: "Matchless in Beauty and Comfort - Is Beacon of Progress and Symbol of All That is Worthy and Fine."

The San Antonio Majestic Theater opened on June 14, 1929, with pomp and ceremony. In keeping with the new atmosphere surrounding the movies in the late twenties, their new-found glamour and sophistication, the opening of the Greater Majestic brought ads which touted its splendor. Air conditioning, a major attraction in the southwest, was featured prominently in the ad. The concept of "an acre of cool, comfortable seats" was further emphasized by the snow which topped the letters of the theatre's name.[1]

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[1] Preddy, Jane, "The Greater Majestic Theatre," *Marquee*, Vol. 20, No. 3. Third Quarter, 1988, pp. 5-6.

In 1988, Las Casas Foundation raised $5.5 million to faithfully restore the theater to its original splendor, with precise reproductions of its upholstery, carpeting, seating, plaster and paint treatments. Besides the many experts directing various facets of the project, the son and grandson of the original plaster artisan were hired to perform the restoration of the damaged plaster. Tony Heinsbergen Company of Los Angeles provided consultation on the paint treatments.

The house is filled with a unique and eclectic blend of Roman, Greek, and fantasy statuary heightening the fantasy of the theater setting. The most notable of these statues is a bronze created by the renowned Harriet Whitney Frishmuth, entitled, "Sweet Grapes." The statue was returned to its original location in the Majestic. At this time, funds are being raised to restore the ornamental plaster and tiled mosaic alcove that once adorned the statue. The alcove was removed in the 1940s for a concession stand.

The Majestic has long attracted people from around the world who come to marvel at its beauty or come for first-class entertainment. Since its reopening in 1989, the Majestic has also hosted events for international leaders. In 1990, the spouses of the world leaders attending the 1990 Economic Summit in Houston came with First Lady Barbara Bush to the Majestic for a special performance. President and Mrs. Bush returned in 1991 to host a state dinner in the Majestic for the leaders of seven Latin American countries.

The Majestic is now the cornerstone of the San Antonio Cultural Arts District. It is the home of the San Antonio Symphony and is a venue for Broadway shows and concerts. The theater's uniqueness and the quality of performances presented there have drawn over 750,000 people from San Antonio, South Texas, and from around the United States in the time period between its reopening in September 1989 until September 1992. The Majestic is one of the small group of restored picture palaces that has been given a new life and is once again a show-place in a lively downtown business and entertainment complex.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hall, Ben. *The Best Remaining Seats, The Golden Age of the Movie Palace*, (New York: Decapo), 1988.

Naylor, David. *American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy*, (New York: Nostrand, Reinhold), 1981.

Preddy, Jane. *Palaces of Dreams*, Catalogue for Eberson Exhibit-McNay Museum of Art, San Antonio, Texas, (New York: Abrams Gleber Warhover), 1989.

The Theater Catalog, 1948-1949. (Philadelphia: J. Emanuel Publications).

"John Eberson," *National Cyclopedia of American Biography*. (New York: James T. White & Co.) Vol. XL, pp. 562-63.

"The Greater Majestic Theatre" *Marquee*. Preddy, Jane. Vol. 20, No. 3 (Columbus: The Journal of the Theatre Historical Society of America), Third Quarter, 1988.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ 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:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office (Texas State Historical Commission)
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
_X_ Local Government
_X_ University (University of Texas at Austin: Ransom Center)
_X_ Other (Specify Repository):
(Dallas Public Library-The Hoblitzelle Collection)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 0.6 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing

A 14 549460 3255120

Verbal Boundary Description:

The "Majestic" property (consisting of the land only located under both the Majestic Building and the Majestic Theatre) legally described as: A 0.600 acre (26,138 square feet) tract of land out of Lots 3, 4, and 5, New City Block 406 (original City Block 21) San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, being that tract of land effectively described in a Warranty Deed from Hoblitzelle Foundation to Majestic Music Hall, Inc., dated April 27, 1977, recorded in Volume 8071 - page 68 of the Deed Records of Bexar County, Texas, SAVE and EXCEPT the West 0.75 feet of Lot 3, said 0.600 as surveyed, as follows:

BEGINNING at a point in the North right-of-way line of College Street and in the East boundary line of that tract from Hoblitzelle Foundation to Majestic Music Hall, Inc., dated April 27, 1977, and recorded in Volume 8071, at page 68 of the Deed Records of Bexar County, Texas, for the Southeast corner of this tract, said point being 0.10 foot inside the South wall and 0.29 foot inside the East wall of an existing building known as the Majestic Building, whence a point in the East face of the East wall of an existing building, 0.15 foot north of the Southeast corner of said building, the point of intersection of the North right-of-way line of College Street and the West right-of-way line of Navarro Street bears South 89 deg. 42′ 47" East a distance of 175.17 feet and a drill hole in the concrete walk bears South 0 deg. 04′ 03" East a distance of 1.00 foot;

THENCE, North, 0 deg. 08′ 20" West parallel to and 0.75 foot East of, measured at right angles, the West lot line of Lot 3 and the East lot line of Lot 2, New City Block 406, a distance of 159.38 feet to a point in the East face of the distance of 159.38 feet to a point in the East wall of the "Little" Brady Building, 0.11 foot South of the outside face of the North Wall of the "Little" Brady Building, the Northeast corner of that tract of land conveyed to Robert B. Green Memorial Hospital by Bexar County National Bank, at page 882 for the Northeast corner of this tract, whence a drill hole set in concrete bears North, 0. deg. 08" 20" West a distance of 1.00 foot;

THENCE, North 89 deg. 58′ 00" East with the South right-of-way line of Houston Street, at 159.63 feet, a lead plug set in the South curb of Houston Street bears North 0 deg. 04′ 03" East a distance of 15.30 feet, and continuing on the same course and by the same count, in all, a distance of 163.63 feet to a point lying 0.19 foot inside the North wall and 0.34 foot inside the

East wall of the Majestic building, the Northwest corner of that tract of land conveyed to Frank R. Prassel by George W. Oge on November 1, 1973, by deed of record in Volume 7251 at page 431 of the Deed Records of Bexar County, Texas, for the Northeast corner of this tract, whence a drill hole set in concrete bears North 0 deg. 04′ 03" West a distance of 1.00 foot;

THENCE, South 0 deg. 04′ 03" East with the East boundary line of that tract of land referred to as the "Second Tract" in said Warranty Deed from Hoblitzelle Foundation to the Majestic Music Hall, Inc., a distance of 160.29 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING.

Boundary Justification:

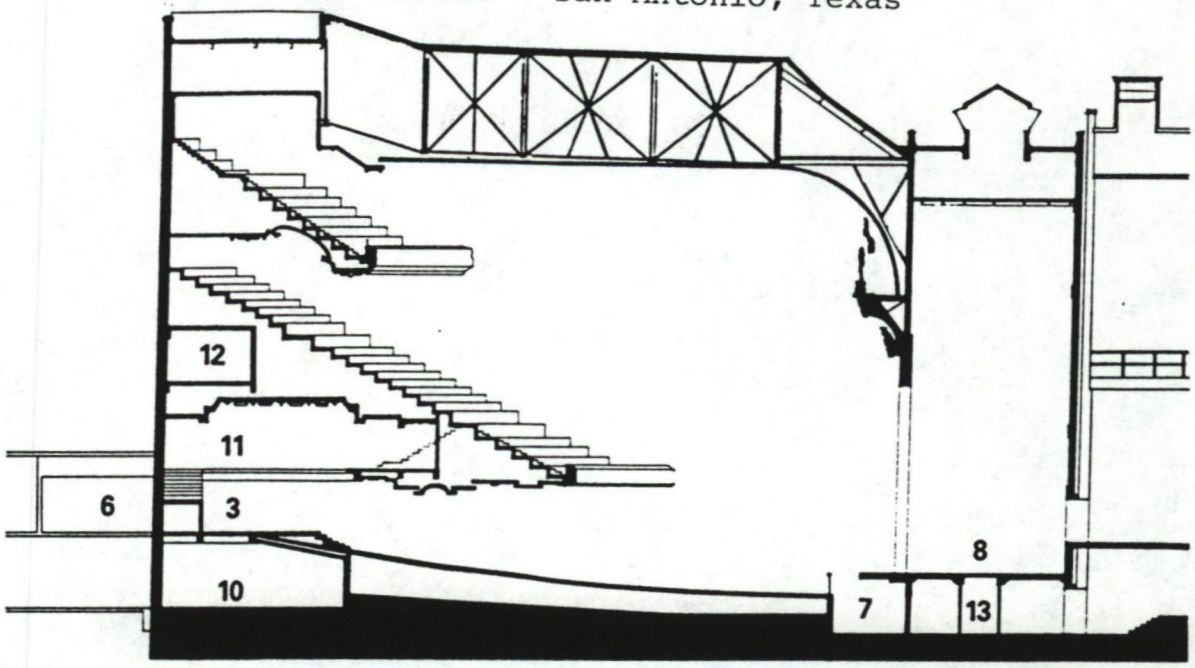
The boundary encompasses the original site of the Majestic Theatre and the Majestic Building.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Mary Margaret McAllen, Projects Director
Org.: Las Casas Foundation
Street/#: P.O. Box 15873
City/Town: San Antonio
State: Texas
ZIP: 78212
Telephone: (512) 223-4343
Date: September 11, 1992

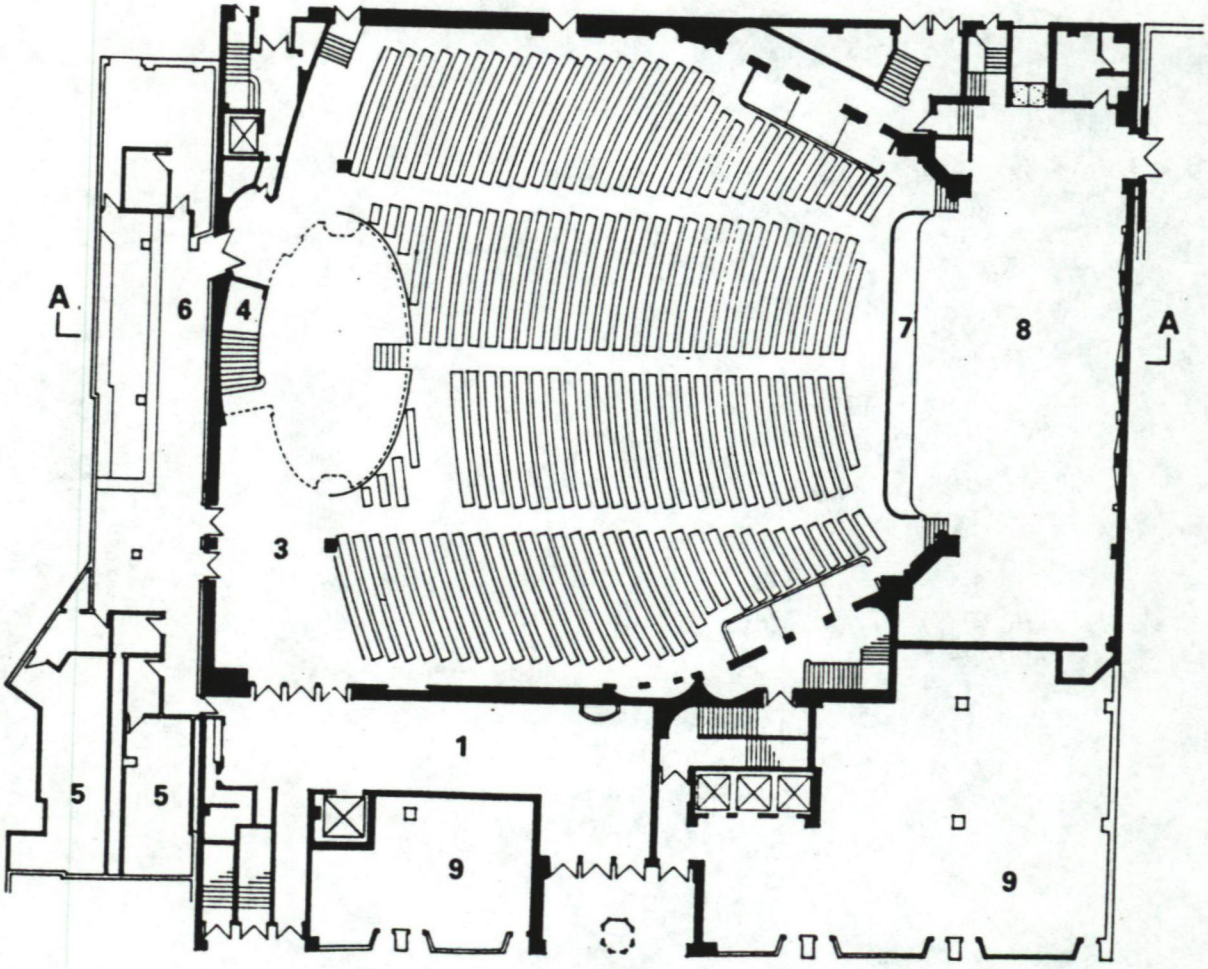
Edited by: Carolyn Pitts, National Park Service
(202) 343-8166

Majestic Theatre - San Antonio, Texas



SECTION A-A

1 LOBBY
2 ELEVATOR
3 FOYER
4 STAIRS TO BALCONY
5 RESTROOMS
6 LOUNGE
7 ORCHESTRA PIT
8 STAGE
9 RETAIL
10 OFFICES
11 BALCONY FOYER
12 THIRD LEVEL FOYER
13 DRESSING ROOMS



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

N

40'/12m

MAJESTIC
COPYRIGHT by HARVEY PATTESON

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Facade
Photo: Harvey Patteson, 1929

View: Majestic Theatre, San Antonio, Tx.
Year: 1929
Credit: Harvey Patteson

1

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Facade
Photo: Harvey Patteson, 1929

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Outer Lobby
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Outer Lobby
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Ticket Kiosk
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

View: Majestic Theatre
San Antonio, Tx.
Ticket Kiosk

Date: 1991
Credit: John Dyer

3

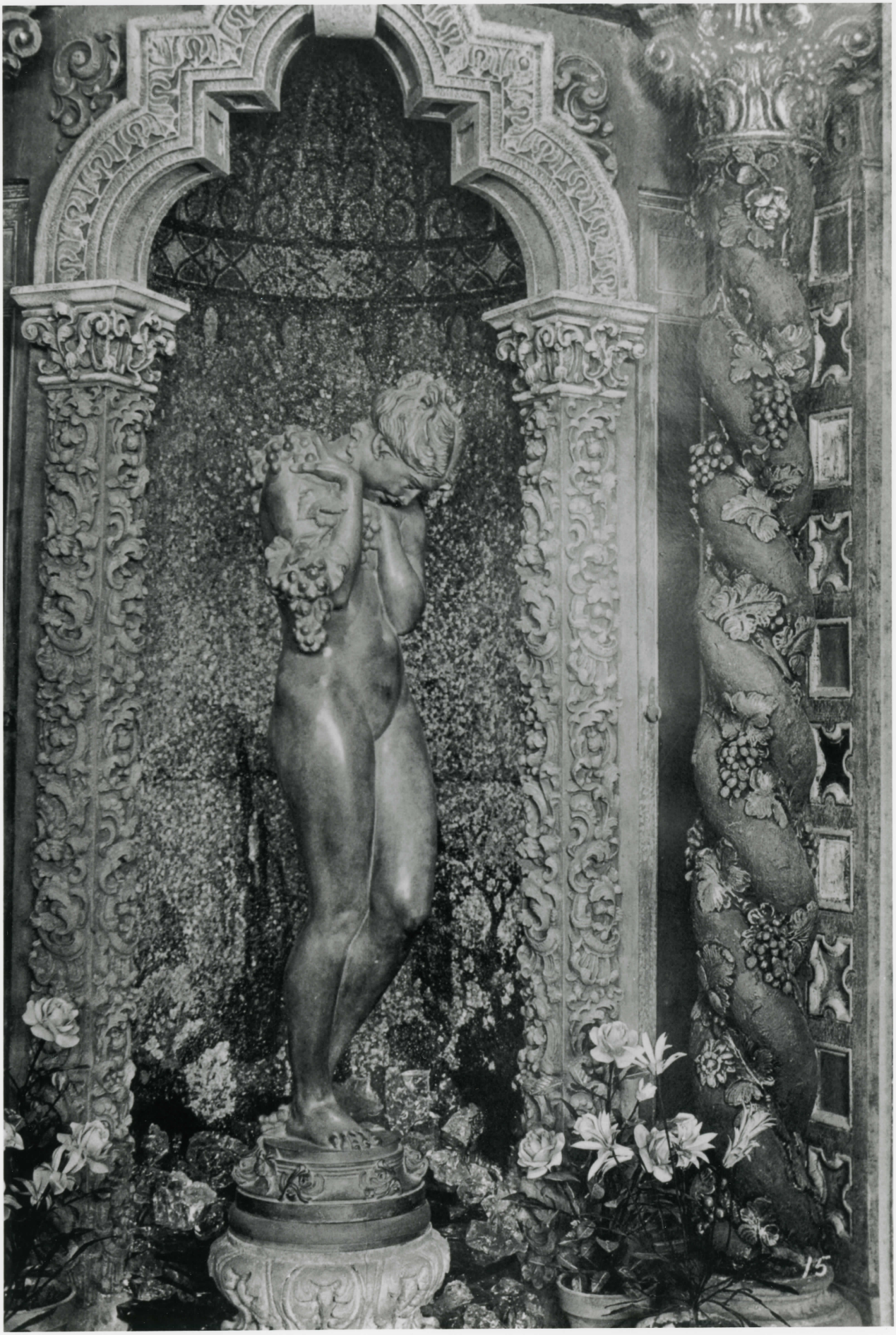
Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Ticket Kiosk
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

MAJESTIC
NCNB MAJESTIC BROADWAY SERIES
DODY GOODMAN
IN NUNSENSE
OCT 24 THRU 29

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Marquee
Photo: John Dyer, 1989

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Marquee
Photo: John Dyer, 1989

View: Majestic Theater
San Antonio, TX.
Marquee
Year: 1989
Credit: John Dyer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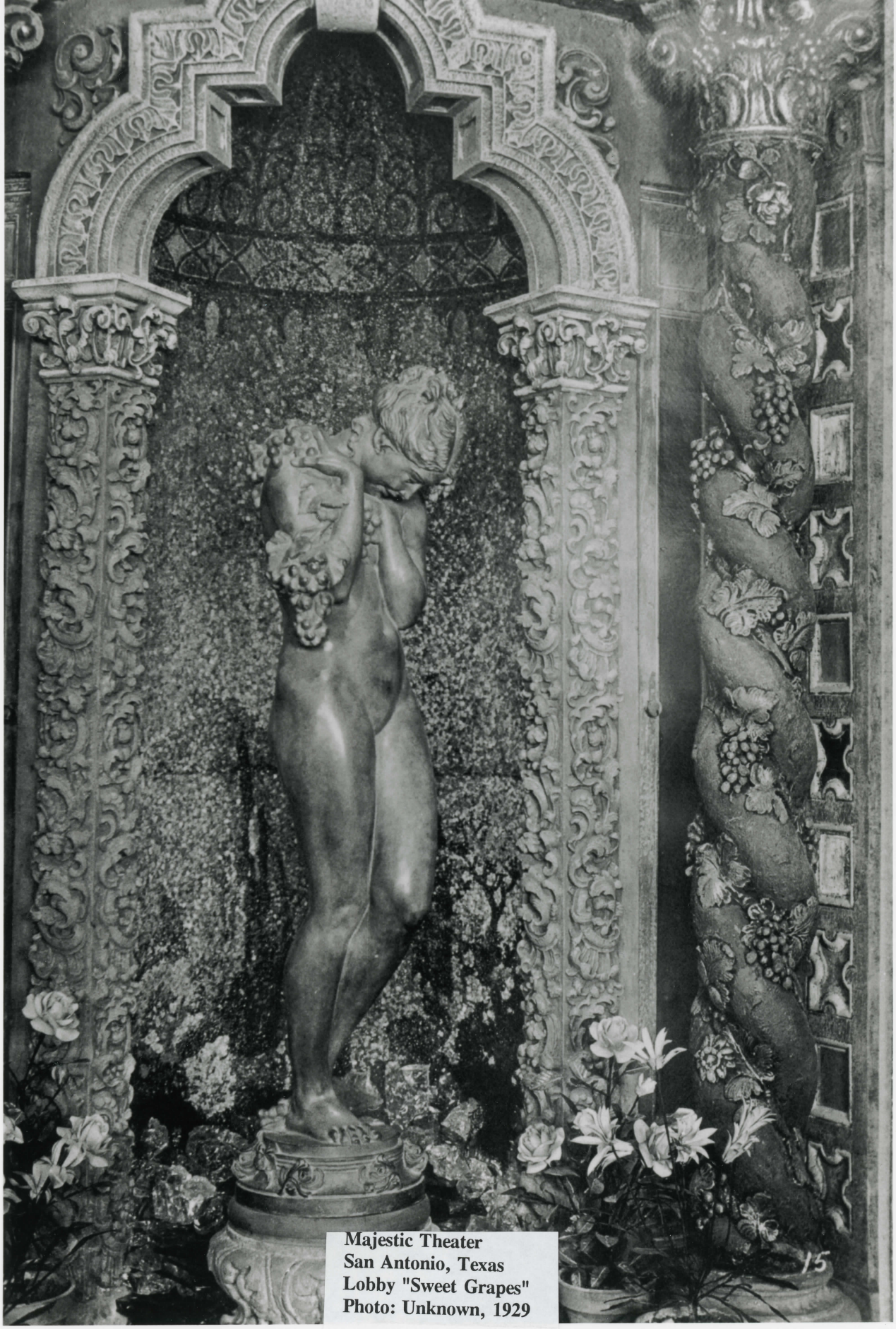


Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Lobby "Sweet Grapes"
Photo: Unknown, 1929

15

Photo: Majestic Theatre, San Antonio, Tx.
Sweet Grapes by Harriet Frishmuth

Date: 1929

Credit: Unknown

5.

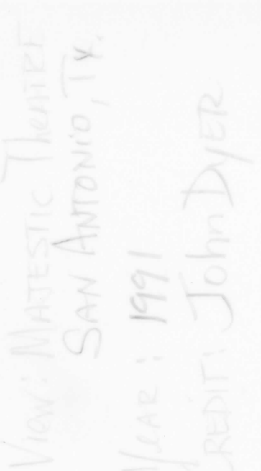
Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Lobby "Sweet Grapes"
Photo: Unknown, 1929

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Lobby
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Lobby
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

View: Majestic Theatre, Lobby, San Antonio, TX
Year: 1991
Credit: John Dyer
6

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Upper Lobby
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

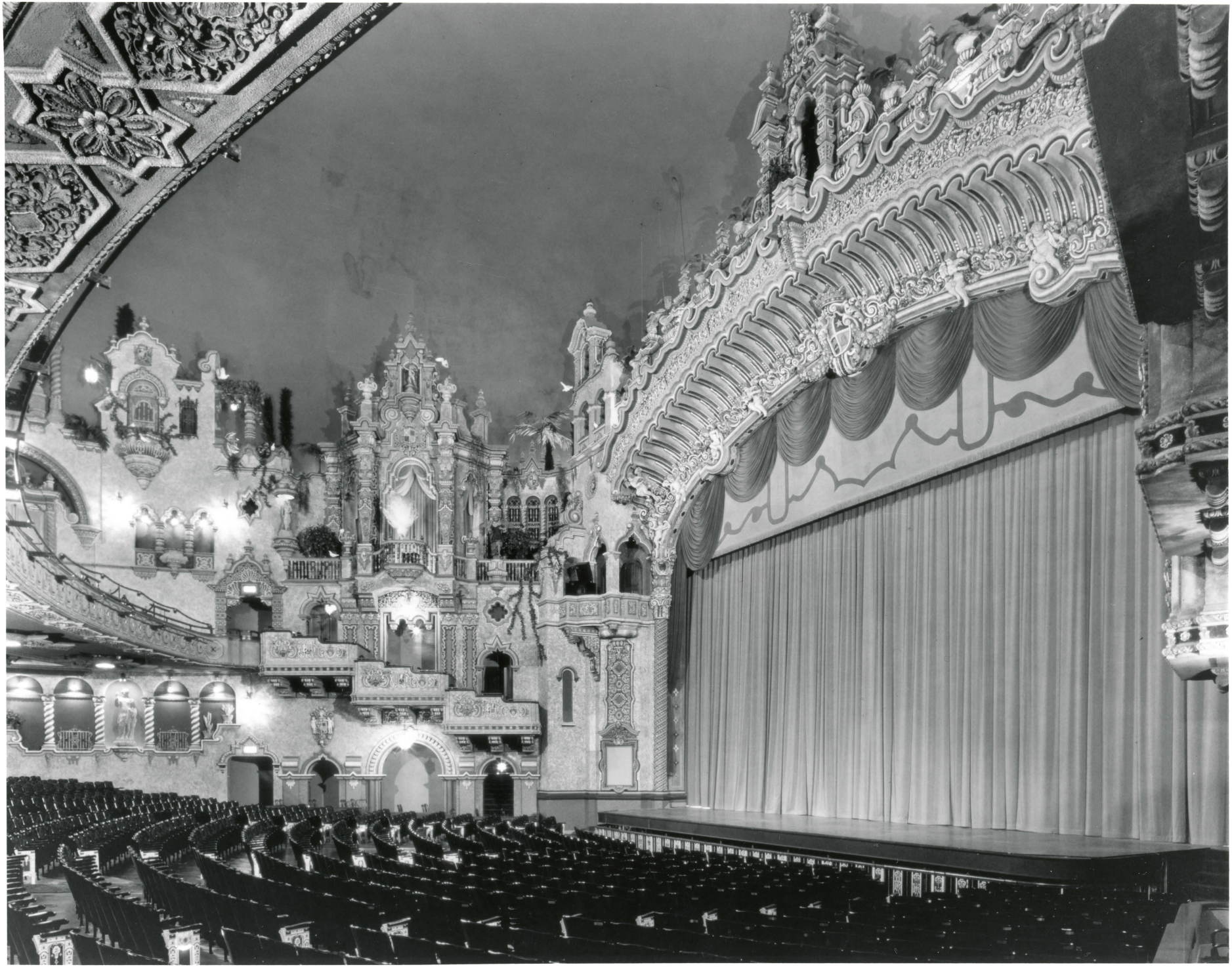


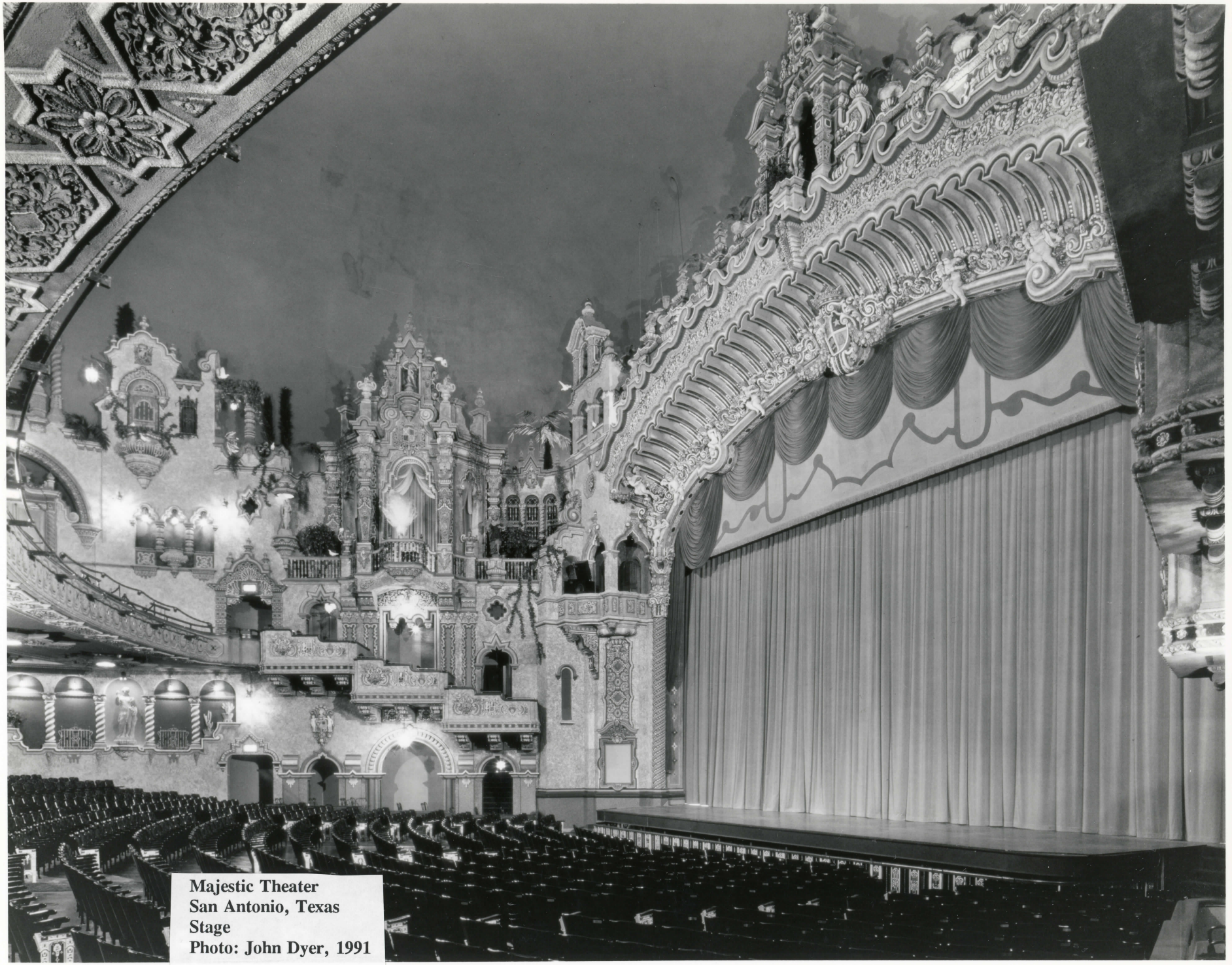
Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Upper Lobby
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Stairwell
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Stairwell
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

VIEW: MAJESTIC THEATRE, SAN ANTONIO, TX.
DATE: 1991
CREDIT: JOHN DYER



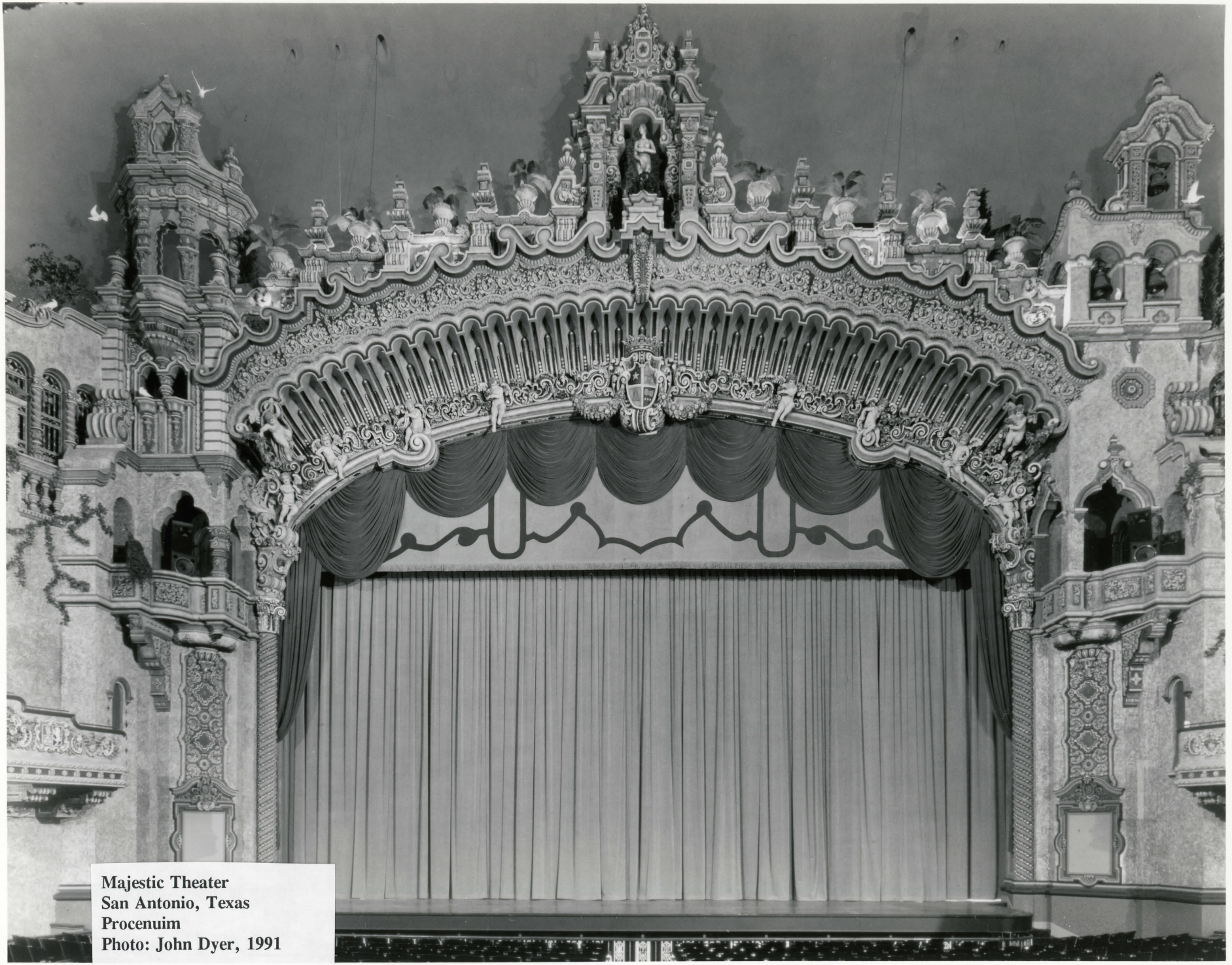


Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Stage
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

9

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Stage
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

VIEW: MAJESTIC THEATRE, SAN ANTONIO, TX.
YEAR: 1991
CREDIT: JOHN DYER



Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Procenuim
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

VIEW: MAJESTIC THEATRE, SAN ANTONIO, TX.
YEAR: 1991
CREDIT: JOHN DYER 10

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Procenuim
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

GREATER SHOW MONTH
R-K-O
MAJESTIC
SCREEN - WALTER HUSTON IN "THE CRIMINAL CODE"
STAGE - RANDALL & WATSON - BOB BOBSON - ORIGINAL HONEY BOYS
SANDY LANG
AND GIRLS
AN RKO SHOW
NATIONAL SHIRT SHOP
Montgomery Studios
RKO
2nd ANNIVERSARY
Show Month

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Exterior
Photo: Unknown, 1930

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Exterior
Photo: Unknown, 1930

Photo: Majestic Theatre San Antonio, TX
Date: 1930
Credit: Unknown

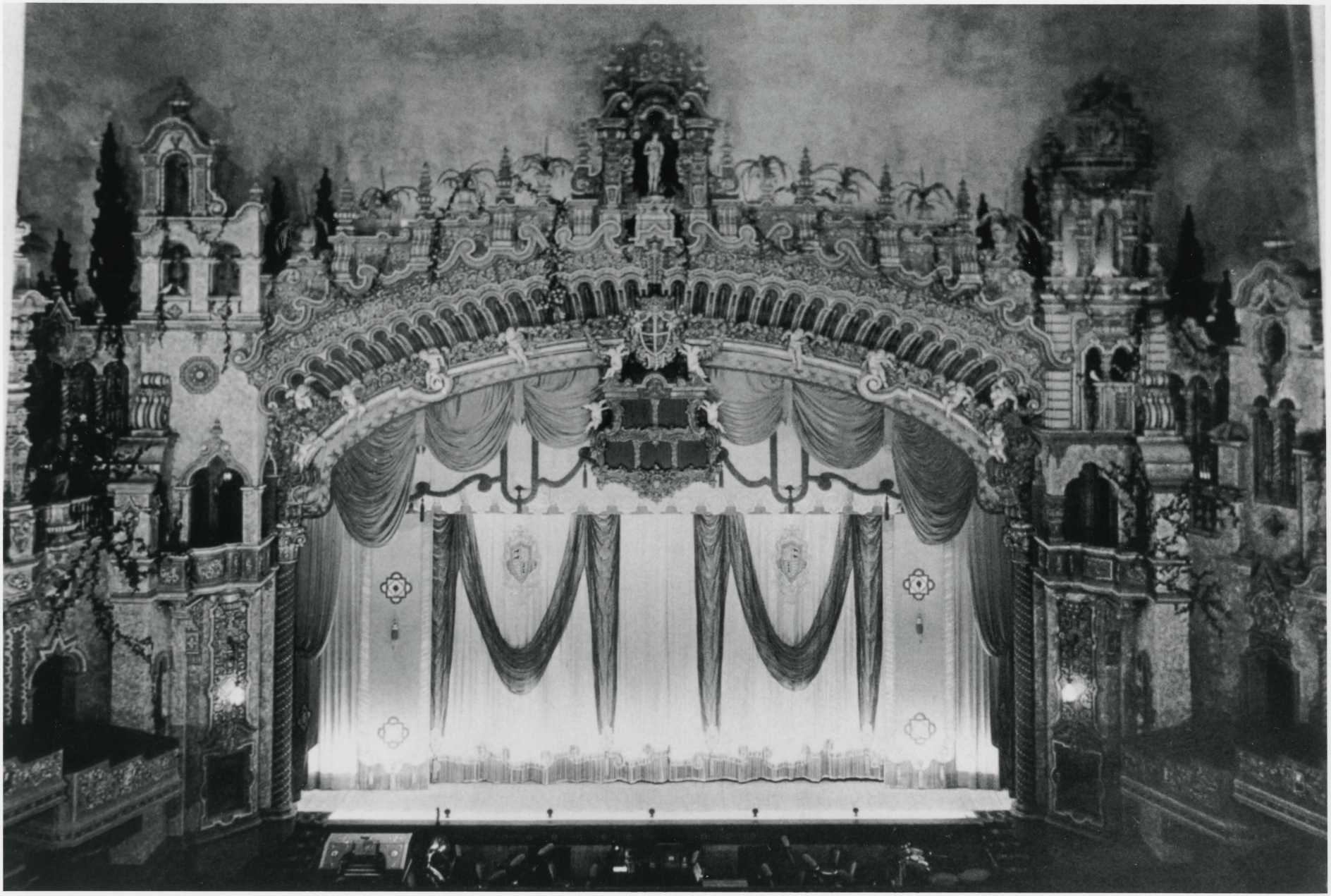


Photo: Majestic Theatre, San Antonio, Tx.
Date: 1929
Credit: Unknown

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

SAN ANTONIO EAST QUADRANGLE
TEXAS–BEXAR CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES TOPOGRAPHIC

6243 II SE (CASTLE HILLS)
6343 III SE (SCHERTZ)
6343 III SW (LONGHORN)
6242 I NE (SAN ANTONIO WEST)
6242 I SE (TERRELL WELLS)
6342 IV SW (SOUTHTON)
6342 I NE (MARTINEZ)
6342 IV SE (ELMENDORF)

98°30′ 549 000m.E. 550 552 27′30″ 553 554 555 556 25′ 557 2 190 000 FEET 558 559 560 98°22′30″
29°30′ 3263 000m.N. 3262 3261 3260 3259 27′30″ 3258 3257 3256 3255 3254 25′ 3253 570 000 FEET 3252 3251 3250 29°22′30″
600 000 FEET
2 160 000 FEET

I MI. TO TEX. LOOP 410
I MI. TO INTERSTATE 10
AUSTIN 60 MI. SELMA 7 MI.
CONVERSE 5 MI.
SEGUIN 27 MI.
MARTINEZ 2.5 MI.
CHINA GROVE 1.7 MI.
I MI. TO I-35
3.5 MI. TO INTERSTATE 37
BROOKS A.F.B. (VIA TEX. LOOP 13) 3.4 MI.

Olmos Park
Olmos Basin Creek
Olmos Dam
ALAMO HEIGHTS
Terrell Hills
City Hall
Cambridge Sch
Incarnate Word College
Trinity University
Alamo Stadium
Zoological Gardens
St Anthony Jr Seminary
Mark Twain Jr High Sch
St Anthony Sch
McKinley Sch
St Mary Hall
Texas Military Institute
St Luke Sch
St John Sch
Sojourner Sch
Golf Course
Quarry
St Anthony Shrine Sch
High Sch (GM 759)
Spring
Radio Tower
Lamar Sch
Mahncke Park
Polo Field
Parking
Club House
Golf Course
San Antonio Country Club
Brooke Army Medical Center
Parking Area
Park
Country Club
Heliport
Well
Firing Range
FORT SAM HOUSTON
Haskin Park
Sunset Memorial Park (Cem)
Cemetery
Radio Towers (KTSA)
Drive-in Theater
Terrell Plaza
San Antonio Art Institute
Wilshire Sch
Gravel Pit
Dawson Massacre Historical Monument
East Terrell Hills Sch
St Thomas More Sch
Cole High Sch
National Cemetery
Trailer Park
Sewage Disposal
Kirby
Jr High Sch
Salado Junction
Well
Pletz County Park
Fish Hatchery
Radio Towers (KONO)
Trailer Park
Skyline Park
Armory
MARTINDALE ARMY AIRFIELD (NATIONAL GUARD)
Sam Houston High Sch
Meadowlawn Memorial Park (Cem)
Drive-in Theater
Pfeiffer Sch
Trailer Park
Dellcrest Park
Dellcrest Plaza
Hirsh Sch
Gravel Pits
Radio Towers (KBER)
ECKERT OIL FIELD
Gravel Pit
SAN ANTONIO
Mahncke Park
Lamar Sch
Mark Twain Jr High Sch
St Anthony Sch
McKinley Sch
St Mary Hall
Travis Sch
San Antonio Jr College
Hawthorne High Sch
Golf Course
Club House
Parking
Wells
Milam Sch
St Patrick Sch
Pershing Sch
Park
Crockett Square
Hosp
Radio Tower
Central High Sch
Radio Tower (KONO)
Providence High Sch
Stephen F Austin Sch
Park
Maverick Park
Radio Tower (WOAI)
Columbus Park
Radio Tower
Santa Rosa Infirmary
Milam Square
Travis Park
Radio Tower (KENS)
Smiley Sch
The Alamo
Station (BM 665)
HemisFair Plaza
Tower of the Americas
CITY CEMETERIES
Hospital
St Gerard High Sch
Radio Tower
Park
Douglas Jr High Sch
Cuney Sch
Burnet Sch
Gaging Sta
Brackenridge High Sch
Well
Roosevelt Park
St Cecilia Sch
Green Sch
St Paul Sch
Substa
Page Jr High Sch
Highland Park Sch
Highland Park
Mission Stadium
St John Seminary
St Peter St Joseph Home
Concepción Park
Riverside Park
Blessed Sacrament Academy
Don Bosco Youth Center
Trailer Park
Riverside Golf Course
St Leo Sch
Morrill Park
Trailer Park
St Teresa Academy
Japhet Sch
Steele Sch
St Margaret Mary Sch
McCreless Shopping Center
Highlands High Sch
Athletic Field
Gravel Pit
South Side Lions Park
South Side Lions Park East
Gravel Pits
Highland Hills Sch
Pecan Valley Country Club
Eastview Cem
Comanche Park
Stewart Sch
Gravel Pits
Gravel Pit
Trailer Park
Wheatley High Sch
Onslow Park
Freeman Coliseum
Willow Springs Golf Course
Lockwood Park
Washington Sch
Fannin Sch
Tynan Sch
Lincoln Park
Lindbergh Park
Our Lady of Victory Sch
St Philips College
Smith Sch
St Gerard Jr High Sch
Herff Sch
Edgar Allen Poe Jr High Sch
Denver Heights Park
Convent of the Holy Ghost
Radio Tower
Substa
Miller Sch
Gates Sch
Riley Jr High Sch
St Benedict Sch
Jefferson Davis Jr High Sch
Trailer Park
Trailer Park
Trailer Park

Draft - Ben has corrected

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Majestic Theatre

Other Name/Site Number: _____

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 230 E. Houston Street Not for publication: ____

City/Town: San Antonio Vicinity: ____

State: TX County: Bexar Code: ____ Zip Code: 78205

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: ___
Public-local: X
Public-State: ___
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property
Building(s): ___
District: ___
Site: ___
Structure: X
Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	X	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
_____	_____	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: Majestic Building

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register _____
____ Determined eligible for the _____
National Register
____ Determined not eligible for the _____
National Register
____ Removed from the National Register _____
____ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Live Performance/ Movie Theatre Sub:

Current: Live Performance/ Movie Theatre Sub:

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification:

Materials:
Foundation: Concrete
Walls: Masonry
Roof: Steel Frame
Other Description:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Majestic Theatre opened in June, 1929, as the flagship house of the Interstate Amusement Company chain. It closed briefly early in 1930, but was in continual operation from that date until the late 1970's, when it went dark for two years. It reopened in 1981 as a venue for touring Broadway shows and has been in almost continuous use since.

The theatre was built as a part of a ~~fifteen~~ (15) story office building, capped by a three-story residential penthouse. The theatre occupies parts of the first six floors of the office building.

Originally, the theatre had 3700 seats, making it the largest in Texas. In addition to the orchestra level, there are two balconies. The second balcony was designated for black patrons and was served by a separate lobby and elevator, located on the opposite side of the block from the main entrance. Use of this balcony was discontinued about 1960. There are plans to restore and reopen it, with a larger lobby on the sixth floor of the office building.

The theatre was designed by Chicago architect John Eberson. Interior decoration was done by Michelangelo Studios, an Eberson family enterprise. Construction, including demolition of the existing building and excavation for the full basement and interior decoration, was completed in thirteen months. The theatre was the first publicly-accessible building in San Antonio to be air-conditioned.

The Majestic was designed as a combination movie/vaudeville house. Consequently, the stage is shallow, only 27 feet, and wing space is minimal. Dressing rooms were limited, occupying the basement area under the stage. There was a full orchestra pit and an organ, still in place but not functioning.

The principal facade is that of the office building; except for the marquee and ornamental ticket kiosk, the theatre is not architecturally apparent on the exterior. Exterior walls are of solid brick or of brick with clay tile back-up. The brick facade is trimmed with cast stone. The structural frame of the theatre is of steel, with major columns and beams encased in concrete fireproofing. The foundation consists of large, spread concrete footings. The roof framing of the theatre is of very deep but lightweight steel trusses. The roof deck is gypsum plank.

The marquee is of architecturally-formed concrete, carried on steel columns with ornamental cast iron covers. Interior partitions are of clay tile, plastered. Virtually all interior surfaces of the theatre are plaster.

Space between #s and use block style throughout

APPEARANCE

The exterior appearance of the Majestic Theatre is much as it was in 1929. The marquee is in its original configuration except for the reader board; the original board, using hundreds of light bulbs, was replaced with a similar-scaled board, internally lit by fluorescent tubes and with neon trim, in the 1940's. A gigantic electric rooftop sign, visible for ~~thirty~~ 30 miles, was removed in the 1950's.

The entrance doors are original, as is the marble and cast

iron ticket kiosk.

The old segregated entrance of College Street consists of a mini-version of the Houston Street marquee and ticket kiosk. This is presently not used, though funds are being raised to restore and reopen it.

The most significantly altered space in the theatre is the outer lobby. A plaster and mosaic tile fountain, in the form of a baroque architectural niche, was destroyed in the 1940's for installation of a concession stand. The centerpiece of this fountain, a bronze sculpture by Harriet Frishmuth, remains. A large aquarium with a highly ornamental plaster surround was also replaced by a concession stand. The aquarium has been returned to its original location with a simplified plaster surround in the form of the original.

With these exceptions, the lobby appears as original with a mosaic tile floor, plaster vaults with painted canvas insert panels, plaster walls and metal-and-glass chandeliers. The paint color scheme is original.

The inner lobby is minimal in size and rises through the second lobby level in an elliptical form. Originally, orchestra level seats extended halfway under the elliptical rotunda; these have been removed to increase the lobby area. The only separation between the inner lobby and the house was a half-height almost to the ceiling, with glass panels. The original wood rail is presently not in place, but is stored awaiting restoration.

Architecturally, the lobby spaces have a rather dark, Mediterranean baroque feeling. The detailing of the two-story rotunda at the inner lobby has a Churrigueresque quality (a lavishly ornamented Spanish 18th century Baroque style). The brilliance of Eberson's atmospheric design concepts, however, are fully realized only upon entering the auditorium. And this is one of Eberson's best.

In an atmospheric theatre, one is made to feel out of doors while inside. Entering the auditorium from the lobby -- an architecturally treated interior space -- the ceiling dissolves to a vaulted blue sky and the side walls become architectural compositions. At the Majestic, the architecture is Spanish/Moorish baroque with towers, turrets, arches, brackets, corbels, twisted columns, straight columns, balconies, oriels, windows, fountains, vine-covered latticework, grillwork, tilework, figurative sculpture, and much more.

Though the two sidewalls are completely different there is a remarkable coherence to the assemblage of details. The proscenium, carried on heroic twisted columns, is an extravaganza of scalloped forms, architectural elements, potted palms, putti, and vegetable swags.

Every stop is pulled out to enhance the illusion of an exotic outdoor scene. The "sky" is not a true dome, but a flat ceiling with large-radius curves down into the side walls. Electric stars, supposedly in astronomically accurate compositions, twinkle. Special effects projectors sweep whispy cloud patterns across the ceiling, optically correcting for the flat-and-curved ceiling planes. Trees, shrubs, flowering plants, and vines abound. Birds perch on architectural elements or are frozen in flight.

The use of plaster on the interior is unrelenting. If it looks like stone, wood, tile or metal, it is really plaster. Even the twisted "iron" bars used as braces in coffered ceilings are plaster. The craftsmanship is astonishing. "Stone," "wood," and "metal" surfaces are unfailingly accurate. Though generally composed of precast elements, much of which was reputedly ordered from catalogs, continuity of line and curve are meticulously maintained.

The house has very much the appearance that it had at its 1929 opening. The original carpet has been replicated as has the seat upholstery. Seating end stanchions have been repainted in the original color scheme. The seats themselves have been rebuilt using mostly original pieces. The grand drape and lambriquin replicate the originals in color and pattern.

The greatest visual change ~~has been to restore the~~ is the restored intensity and vibrance of the original paint color scheme. Those who remember the theatre from the recent past, with its dun and dusty colors, even a dusty blue sky, are somewhat taken aback. Because the original polychrome scheme was done completely in tempera (~~seventy~~ 70 feet or more above the floor), cleaning using solvents was not possible. All decorative surfaces were vacuumed and brushed, then repointed using partially loaded brushes dragged across the rough plaster surfaces.

The original foliage was beyond salvage and was replaced with new synthetic plant materials compatible in scale with the originals. Birds were replaced one for one, though with some changes in species. Original light fixtures were rewired and repainted and replicated where missing. Cloud machines were replaced with updated products by the Austrian manufacturer of the originals.

Lobbies at the upper floors are very close to their original appearance. Decorative plaster surfaces have been repainted as in the house, lighting restored, and carpet replaced to match the original. Unfortunately, most of the antique furniture gathered by Eberson to furnish the lobbies has been lost.

Restroom and similar support areas have been updated for code compliance and convenience. The dressing rooms have been completely rebuilt.

New chillers, boilers, and pumps have been installed. However, it was determined that the original air handling units could not be improved upon in terms of efficiency of operation and low noise levels.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A___ B___ C X D___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A___ B___ C___ D___ E___ F___ G___

NHL Criteria: 4 & ~~5~~

NHL Theme(s): XVI: Architecture

Areas of Significance:	Period(s) of Significance		Significant Dates
Architecture	1929	~~1992~~ 1942	

Significant Person(s): _____

Cultural Affiliation: _____

Architect/Builder: Eberson, John 1875 - 1954

Insert:

The great movie palaces gradually replaced Burlesque as entertainment within everyone's reach - rich and poor alike. In the 20's and 30's, the picture palace flourished, in big cities and small towns as fantasy worlds in which anyone could escape for a few hours. When the boom was over, it left remnants of this glittering age across America and a handful have been reused and restored -- (the Atlanta Fox, Columbus' Ohio Theater, Detroit's Fox Theater, Milwaukee's Palast, and two great Art Deco halls; the Paramount in Oakland and New York's Radio City Music Hall) They are all National Historic Landmarks. There are several others, restorations that should be noted but San Antonio's Majestic is the finest surviving Atmospheric theatre by the masters of that style - the Ebersons.

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Majestic Theatre is one of the few remaining atmospheric/fantasy palaces in the United States. It is one of the most remarkable, faithfully restored theatres in the Southwest. The Majestic Theatre was designed by John Eberson and built in 1929 for the Interstate Theatre Amusement Company.

By 1928, Eberson and his son Drew, who joined him as a partner in 1926, had already designed atmospheric theaters in many parts of the country, many of them for Karl Hoblitzelle. Although Hoblitzelle purchased property in San Antonio as early as 1911, it was not on his own property that the new, Greater Majestic was built. The land he leased for the office building-theatre complex was owned by J.M. Nix, who purchased it from the Enterprise Company of Dallas in 1920. There was a covenant running with the land stating "that neither aforesaid land nor any building or improvement or any part hereon shall be used or occupied for theatrical, motion picture or amusement purposes at any time prior to April 5, 1928." However the 1929 opening of the Majestic exceeded that time limit.

After the lease was finalized, Eberson's plans were accepted and contracts were sought for the $3,000,000 building. It was to the largest theatre in the south with a seating capacity of 4,000. The local contract firm of Walsh and Burney, Inc., was selected for the project and Otto Johnson was picked as the local architectural representative. Building began immediately. By June 8, 1929, final touches were put on the theater. Debris was removed from the site, last minute pointing was done, carpet and tile installations were complete and antique furniture and statuary were moved into place. Hanging the sign on the building's front drew a crowd of hundreds who watched the enormous beacon as it was but in place by a group of workmen.

The opening of the building had a special significance in addition to its theatrical functions. In many ways, it was a symbol of newness, of a progressiveness which San Antonio wished to identify with. This was evident in the opening ceremonies which marked the beginning of "Prosperity Month" in the city. The celebration, largely centered around the Greater Majestic, would "commemorate the era of progress and development that has occurred in this state in recent years." This festival would supposedly draw as many as 500,000 visitors to the city due in part to "reduced railroad fares" in local as well as statewide areas.

....A banquet was held the night of its opening during which prominent citizens and other notable guests praised the accomplishments of the city as well as the

new theater. The chief of Staff of the Mexican government, General Tapia, was an honored guest at opening day ceremonies....

Profits from the opening night performance were to be donated to the Children's Hospital Fund, a special project of the San Antonio Junior League. By June 12, two days before the new theater's opening, this group had raised $15,000 through ticket sales. By opening night this amount had risen to $25,000, $5,000 above the expected goal. There was a separation of the profits of the sales which reflected life in the twenties not only in San Antonio, but in the entire country. The money was divided by theater section with profits from the white section going to the Children's Hospital and those from the black section distributed to the Orphanage and the Campfire Girls.

Advance publicity heralded the opening of the theater and special articles appeared the June 9, 1929 issue of the San Antonio Express. Headlines of one article symbolized the hyperbole lavished on the opening theater in this way: "Matchless in Beauty and Comfort - Is Beacon of Progress and Symbol of All That is Worthy and Fine."

The San Antonio Majestic Theater opened on June 14, 1929, with pomp and ceremony. In keeping with the new atmosphere surrounding the movies in the late twenties, their new-found glamour and sophistication, the opening of the Greater Majestic brought ads which touted its splendor. Air conditioning, a major attraction in the southwest, was featured prominently in the ad. The concept of "an acre of cool, comfortable seats" was further emphasized by the snow which topped the letters of the theatre's name.[1]

In 1988, Las Casas Foundation raised $5.5 million to faithfully restore the theatre to its original splendor, with precise reproductions of its upholstery, carpeting, seating, plaster and point treatments. Besides the many experts directing various facets of the project, the son and grandson of the original plaster artisan were hired to perform the restoration of the damaged plaster. Tony Heinsbergen Company of Los Angeles provided consultation on the paint treatments.

The house is filled with a unique and eclectic blend of Roman, Greek, and fantasy statuary heightening the fantasy of the theatre setting. The most notable of these statues is a bronze crated by the renowned Harriet Whitney Frishmuth, entitled, "Sweet Grapes." The statue was replaced to its original location in the Majestic. At this time, funds are being raised to restore the ornamental plaster and tiled mosaic alcove that once adorned the statue. It was removed in the 1940's for a concession stand.

The Majestic is now the cornerstone of the San Antonio Cultural Arts District and is the home of the San Antonio Symphony and is a venue for Broadway shows and concerts. The

theatre's uniqueness and the quality of performances presented there have drawn over 700,000 people from San Antonio, South Texas and from around the United States in the time period between its reopening in September 1989 until July 1992.

The Majestic has long attracted people from around the world who come to marvel at its beauty or come for first-class entertainment. Since its reopening in 1989, the Majestic has also hosted events for international leaders. In 1990, the spouses of the world leaders attending the 1990 Economic Summit in Houston, came with First Lady Barbara Bush, to the Majestic for a special performance. President and Mrs. Bush returned in 1991 to host a state dinner in the Majestic for the leaders of seven Latin American countries.

1. Preddy, Jane, "The Greater Majestic Theatre," Marquee, Vol. 20, No. 3. Third Quarter, 1988, pg. 5-6.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Hall, Ben. The Best Remaining Seats, The Golden Age of the Movie Palace, (New York: Decapo), 1988.
- Naylor, David. American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy, (New York: Nostrand, Reinhold), 1981.
- Preddy, Jane. Palaces of Dreams Catalogue for Eberson Exhibit - McNay Museum of Art, San Antonio, Texas, (New York: Abrams Gleber Warhover), 1989.
- The Theater Catalog, 1948 - 1949. (Philadelphia: J. Emanuel Publications).
- "John Eberson," National Cyclopedia of American Biography. (New York: James T. White & Co.) Vol. XL, pp. 562-3.
- "The Greater Majestic Theatre" Marquee. Preddy, Jane. Vol. 20, No. 3 (Columbus: The Journal of the Theatre Historical Society of America), Third Quarter, 1988.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ 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:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office (Texas State Historical Commission)
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
_X_ Local Government
_X_ University (University of Texas at Austin: Ransom Center)
_X_ Other: Specify Repository: _____
(Dallas Public Library - The Hoblitzelle Collection)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 0.600 acres

UTM References:

	Zone	Northing	Easting		Zone	Northing	Easting
A	14	549460	3255120	B			
C				D			
E				F			

Verbal Boundary Description:

all this is unnecessary if a statement to the local deed book can be made; I presume the site is a single lot

The "Majestic" property (consisting of the land only located under both the Majestic Building and the Majestic Theatre) legally described as: A 0.600 acre (26,138 square feet) tract of land out of Lots 3, 4, and 5, New City Block 406 (original City Block 21) San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, being that tract of land effectively described in a Warranty Deed from Hoblitzelle Foundation to Majestic Music Hall, Inc., dated April 27, 1977, recorded in Volume 8071 - page 68 of the Deed Records of Bexar County, Texas, SAVE and EXCEPT the West 0.75 feet of Lot 3, said 0.600 as surveyed, as follows:

BEGINNING at a point in the North right-of-way line of College Street and in the East boundary line of that tract from Hoblitzelle Foundation to Majestic Music Hall, Inc., dated April 27, 1977, and recorded in Volume 8071, at page 68 of the Deed Records of Bexar County, Texas, for the Southeast corner of this tract, said point being 0.10 foot inside the South wall and 0.29 foot inside the East wall of an existing building known as the Majestic Building, whence a point in the East face of the East wall of an existing building, 0.15 foot north of the Southeast corner of said building, the point of intersection of the North right-of-way line of College Street and the West right-of-way line of Navarro Street bears South 89 deg. 42′ 47" East a distance of 175.17 feet and a drill hole in the concrete walk bears South 0 deg. 04′ 03" East a distance of 1.00 foot;

THENCE, North, 0 deg. 08′ 20" West parallel to and 0.75 foot East of, measured at right angles, the West lot line of Lot 3 and the East lot line of Lot 2, New City Block 406, a distance of 159.38 feet to a point in the East face of the distance of 159.38 feet to a point in the East wall of the "Little" Brady Building, 0.11 foot South of the outside face of the North Wall of the "Little" Brady Building, the Northeast corner of that tract of land conveyed to Robert B. Green Memorial Hospital by Bexar County National Bank, at page 882 for the Northeast corner of this tract, whence a drill hole set in concrete bears North, 0. deg. 08" 20" West a distance of 1.00 foot;

THENCE, North 89 deg. 58′ 00" East with the South right-of-way line of Houston Street, at 159.63 feet, a lead plug set in the South curb of Houston Street bears North 0 deg. 04′ 03" East a distance of 15.30 feet, and continuing on the same course and by the same count, in all, a distance of 163.63 feet to a point

lying 0.19 foot inside the North wall and 0.34 foot inside the East wall of the Majestic building, the Northwest corner of that tract of land conveyed to Frank R. Prassel by George W. Oge on November 1, 1973, by deed of record in Volume 7251 at page 431 of the Deed Records of Bexar County, Texas, for the Northeast corner of this tract, whence a drill hole set in concrete bears North 0 deg. 04′ 03" West a distance of 1.00 foot;

THENCE, South 0 deg. 04′ 03" East with the East boundary line of that tract of land referred to as the "Second Tract" in said Warranty Deed from Hoblitzelle Foundation to the Majestic Music Hall, Inc., a distance of 160.29 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary encompasses the ~~is~~ original site of the Majestic Theatre and Majestic Building.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: . Mary Margaret McAllen, Projects Director
Edited by Carolyn Pitts, National Park Service
(202) 343-8166

Org.: . Las Casas Foundation

Date: . September 11, 1992

Street/#: . P.O. Box 15873

City/Town: . San Antonio

State: . Texas

ZIP: . 78212

Telephone: . (512) 223-4343

September 11, 1992

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Majestic Theatre

Other Name/Site Number: _____

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 230 E. Houston Street Not for publication: ____

City/Town: San Antonio Vicinity: ____

State: TX County: Bexar Code: ____ Zip Code: 78205

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: ___
Public-local: X
Public-State: ___
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District: ___
Site: ___
Structure: X
Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	X	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of related multiple property listing: ~~Majestic Building~~

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register _____
____ Determined eligible for the _____
National Register
____ Determined not eligible for the _____
National Register
____ Removed from the National Register _____
____ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: ~~Live Performance/~~ Recreation and Culture / ~~Movie Theatre~~ Sub: theater

Current: ~~Live Performance/~~ ~~Movie Theatre~~ Recreation and Culture Sub: theater / music facility / auditorium

Commerce / Trade business

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Late 19th AND 20TH Century Revivals / Mission / Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials:
Foundation: Concrete
Walls: ~~Masonry~~ Brick
Roof: ~~Steel Frame~~ Concrete (gypsum)
Other Description: Cast stone (trim) / Concrete (marquee) / Cast-iron (marquee)

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Majestic Theatre opened in June, 1929, as the flagship house of the Interstate Amusement Company chain. It closed briefly early in 1930, but was in continual operation from that date until the late 1970s, when it went dark for two years. It reopened in 1981 as a venue for touring Broadway shows and has been in almost continuous use since.

The theater was built as a part of a 15-story office building, capped by a three-story residential penthouse. The theater occupies parts of the first six floors of the office building.

Originally, the theater had 3700 seats, making it the largest in Texas. In addition to the orchestra level, there are two balconies. The second balcony was designated for black patrons and was served by a separate lobby and elevator located on the opposite side of the block from the main entrance. Use of this balcony was discontinued about 1960. There are plans to restore and reopen it with a larger lobby on the sixth floor of the office building.

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The Majestic was designed as a combination movie/vaudeville house. Consequently, the stage is shallow, only 27 feet, and wing space is minimal. Dressing rooms were limited, occupying the basement area under the stage. There was a full orchestra pit and an organ, still in place but not functioning.

The principal facade is that of the office building. Except for the marquee and ornamental ticket kiosk, the theater is not architecturally ~~apparent~~ elaborate on the exterior. Exterior walls are of solid brick or of brick with clay tile back-up. The brick facade is trimmed with cast stone. The structural frame of the ~~theatre~~ ES is of steel, with major columns and beams encased in concrete fireproofing. The foundation consists of large, spread concrete footings. The roof framing of the theater is of very deep, but lightweight, steel trusses. The roof deck is gypsum plank.

The marquee is of architecturally-formed concrete carried on steel columns with ornamental cast iron covers. Interior partitions are of clay tile ~~plastered~~. Virtually all interior surfaces of the theater are finished with plaster.

~~APPEARANCE~~

The exterior appearance of the Majestic Theatre is much as it was in 1929. The marquee is in its original configuration except for the reader board. The original board, using hundreds of light bulbs, was replaced with a similar-scaled board, internally lit by fluorescent tubes and with neon trim, in the 1940s. A gigantic electric rooftop sign, visible for 30 miles, was removed in the 1950s.

The entrance doors are original, as is the marble and cast iron ticket kiosk. The old segregated entrance ~~of~~ on College Street consists of a mini-version of the Houston Street marquee and ticket kiosk. This is presently not used, though funds are being raised to restore and reopen it.

The most significantly altered space in the theater is the outer lobby. A plaster and mosaic tile fountain, in the form of a baroque architectural niche, was destroyed in the 1940s for installation of a concession stand. The centerpiece of this fountain, a bronze sculpture by Harriet Frishmuth, remains. A large aquarium with a highly ornamental plaster surround was also replaced by a concession stand. The aquarium has been returned to its original location with a simplified plaster surround in the form of the original.

With these exceptions, the lobby appears as originally built with a mosaic tile floor, plaster vaults with painted canvas insert panels, plaster walls, and metal-and-glass chandeliers. The paint color scheme is original.

The inner lobby is minimal in size and rises through the second lobby level in an elliptical form. Originally, orchestra level seats extended halfway under the elliptical rotunda; these have been removed to increase the lobby area. The only separation between the inner lobby and the house was a half-height almost to the ceiling, with glass panels. The original wood rail is presently not in place but is stored awaiting restoration.

Architecturally, the lobby spaces have a rather dark, Mediterranean baroque feeling. The detailing of the two-story rotunda ~~at~~ of the inner lobby has a Churrigueresque quality -- a lavishly ornamented, Spanish, 18th century Baroque style. The brilliance of Eberson's atmospheric design concepts, however, are fully realized only upon entering the auditorium. ~~And~~ This is one of Eberson's best.

In an atmospheric theatre, one is made to feel out of doors while inside. Entering the auditorium from the lobby - an architecturally treated interior space - the ceiling dissolves to a vaulted blue sky and the side walls become architectural compositions. At the Majestic, the architecture is Spanish/Moorish baroque with towers, turrets, arches, brackets, corbels, twisted columns, straight columns, balconies, oriels, windows, fountains, vine-covered latticework, grillwork,

tilework, figurative sculpture, and much more. one paragraph.

Though the two sidewalls are completely different there is a remarkable coherence to the assemblage of details. The proscenium, carried on heroic twisted columns, is an extravaganza of scalloped forms, architectural elements, potted palms, putti, and vegetable swags.

Every stop is pulled out to enhance the illusion of an exotic outdoor scene. The "sky" is not a true dome but a flat ceiling with large-radius curves down into the side walls. Electric stars, supposedly in astronomically accurate compositions, twinkle. Special effects projectors sweep wispy cloud patterns across the ceiling, optically correcting for the flat-and-curved ceiling planes. Trees, shrubs, flowering plants, and vines abound. Birds perch on architectural elements or are frozen in flight.

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The house has very much the appearance that it had at its 1929 opening. The original carpet has been replicated, as has the seat upholstery. Seating end stanchions have been repainted in the original color scheme. The seats themselves have been rebuilt using mostly original pieces. The grand drape and lambriquin replicate the originals in color and pattern.

The greatest visual change is the restored intensity and vibrance of the original paint color scheme. Those who remember the theater from the recent past, with its dun and dusty colors, even a dusty blue sky, are somewhat taken aback. Because the original polychrome scheme was done completely in tempera (70 feet or more above the floor), cleaning using solvents was not possible. All decorative surfaces were vacuumed and brushed, then repainted using partially loaded brushes dragged across the rough plaster surfaces.

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Restroom and similar support areas have been updated for code compliance and convenience. The dressing rooms have been completely rebuilt. one paragraph

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A___ B___ C X D___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A___ B___ C___ D___ E___ F___ G___

NHL Criteria: 4

NHL Theme(s): XVI: Architecture

M: Period Revivals
2: Spanish (Mission)

Areas of Significance:	Period(s) of Significance		Significant Dates
Architecture	1929	1942	

Significant Person(s): _____

Cultural Affiliation: _____

Architect/Builder: Eberson, John 1875 - 1954

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Majestic Theatre is one of the few remaining atmospheric/fantasy palaces in the United States. It is one of the most remarkable, faithfully restored theaters in the Southwest.

The great movie palaces gradually replaced Burlesque as entertainment within everyone's reach, rich and poor alike. In the 1920s and 1930s, the picture palace flourished, in big cities and small towns, as fantasy worlds into which anyone could escape for a few hours. When the boom was over, it left remnants of this glittering age across America and a handfull have been reused and restored -- the Atlanta Fox, Columbus' Ohio Theater, Detroit's Fox Theater, Milwaukee's Pabst Theater, and two great Art Deco halls, the Paramount in Oakland and New York's Radio City Music Hall. They are all National Historic Landmarks. There are several other restorations that should be noted, but San Antonio's Majestic is the finest surviving Atmospheric theater by the masters of that style, the Ebersons.

The theater was designed by John Eberson and built in 1929 for the Interstate Theatre Amusement Company.

By 1928, Eberson and his son Drew, who joined him as a partner in 1926, had already designed atmospheric theaters in many parts of the country, many of them for (Karl) Hoblitzelle. Although Hoblitzelle purchased property in San Antonio as early as 1911, it was not on his own property that the new, Greater Majestic was built. The land he leased for the office building-theatre complex was owned by J.M. Nix, who purchased it from the Enterprise Company of Dallas in 1920. There was a covenant running with the land stating "that neither aforesaid land nor any building or improvement or any part hereon shall be used or occupied for theatrical, motion picture or amusement purposes at any time prior to April 5, 1928." However, the 1929 opening of the Majestic exceeded that time limit.

After the lease was finalized, Eberson's plans were accepted and contracts were sought for the $3,000,000 building. It was the largest theatre in the south with a seating capacity of 4,000. The local contract firm of Walsh and Burney, Inc., was selected for the project and Otto Johnson was picked as the local architectural representative. Building began immediately. By June 8, 1929, final touches were put on the theater. Debris was removed from the site, last minute pointing was done, carpet and tile installations were complete, and antique furniture and statuary were moved into place. Hanging the sign on the building's front drew a crowd of hundreds who watched the enormous beacon as it was put in place by a group of workmen.

The opening of the building had a special significance in addition to its theatrical functions. In many ways, it was a symbol of newness, of a progressiveness which San Antonio wished to identify with. This was evident in the opening ceremonies which marked the beginning of "Prosperity Month" in the city. The celebration, largely centered around the Greater Majestic, would "commemorate the era of progress and development that has occurred in this state in recent years." This festival would supposedly draw as many as 500,000 visitors to the city due in part to "reduced railroad fares" in local as well as statewide areas.

... A banquet was held the night of its opening during which prominent citizens and other notable guests praised the accomplishments of the city as well as the new theater. The chief of Staff of the Mexican government, General Tapia, was an honored guest at opening day ceremonies....

Profits from the opening night performance were to be donated to the Children's Hospital Fund, a special project of the San Antonio Junior League. By June 12, two days before the new theater's opening, this group had raised $15,000 through ticket sales. By opening night this amount had risen to $25,000, $5,000 above the expected goal. There was a separation of the profits of the sales which reflected life in the twenties, not only in San Antonio, but in the entire country. The money was divided by theater section with profits from the white section going to the Children's Hospital and those from the black section distributed to the Orphanage and the Campfire Girls.

Advance publicity heralded the opening of the theater and special articles appeared in the June 9, 1929 issue of the San Antonio Express. Headlines of one article symbolized the hyperbole lavished on the opening theater in this way: "Matchless in Beauty and Comfort - Is Beacon of Progress and Symbol of All That is Worthy and Fine."

The San Antonio Majestic Theater opened on June 14, 1929, with pomp and ceremony. In keeping with the new atmosphere surrounding the movies in the late twenties, their new-found glamour and sophistication, the opening of the Greater Majestic brought ads which touted its splendor. Air conditioning, a major attraction in the southwest, was featured prominently in the ad. The concept of "an acre of cool, comfortable seats" was further emphasized by the snow which topped the letters of the theatre's name. *

In 1988, Las Casas Foundation raised $5.5 million to faithfully restore the theater to its original splendor, with precise reproductions of its upholstery, carpeting, seating, plaster and

paint
~~point~~ treatments. Besides the many experts directing various facets of the project, the son and grandson of the original plaster artisan were hired to perform the restoration of the damaged plaster. Tony Heinsbergen Company of Los Angeles provided consultation on the paint treatments.

The house is filled with a unique and eclectic blend of Roman, Greek, and fantasy statuary heightening the fantasy of the theater setting. The most notable of these statues is a bronze created by the renowned Harriet Whitney Frishmuth, entitled, "Sweet Grapes." The statue was returned to its original location in the Majestic. At this time, funds are being raised to restore the ornamental plaster and tiled mosaic alcove that once adorned the statue. ~~It~~ The alcove was removed in the 1940s for a concession stand.

move to be second to last paragraph

This is now last paragraph

The Majestic is now the cornerstone of the San Antonio Cultural Arts District. It is the home of the San Antonio Symphony and is a venue for Broadway shows and concerts. The theater's uniqueness and the quality of performances presented there have drawn over 750,000 people from San Antonio, South Texas, and from around the United States in the time period between its reopening in September 1989 until September 1992. The Majestic is one of the small

The Majestic has long attracted people from around the world who come to marvel at its beauty or come for first-class entertainment. Since its reopening in 1989, the Majestic has also hosted events for international leaders. In 1990, the spouses of the world leaders attending the 1990 Economic Summit in Houston, came with First Lady Barbara Bush, to the Majestic for a special performance. President and Mrs. Bush returned in 1991 to host a state dinner in the Majestic for the leaders of seven Latin American countries.

groups of restored picture palaces that has been given a new life and is once again a show-place in a lively downtown business and entertainment complex.

* Preddy, Jane, "The Greater Majestic Theatre," Marquee, Vol. 20, No. 3. Third Quarter, 1988, pp. 5-6.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Hall, Ben. The Best Remaining Seats, The Golden Age of the Movie Palace, (New York: Decapo), 1988.

- Naylor, David. American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy, (New York: Nostrand, Reinhold), 1981.

- Preddy, Jane. Palaces of Dreams Catalogue for Eberson Exhibit - McNay Museum of Art, San Antonio, Texas, (New York: Abrams Gleber Warhover), 1989.

- The Theater Catalog, 1948-1949. (Philadelphia: J. Emanuel Publications).

- "John Eberson," National Cyclopedia of American Biography. (New York: James T. White & Co.) Vol. XL, pp. 562-63.

- "The Greater Majestic Theatre" Marquee. Preddy, Jane. Vol. 20, No. 3 (Columbus: The Journal of the Theatre Historical Society of America), Third Quarter, 1988.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ 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:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office (Texas State Historical Commission)
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
_X_ Local Government
_X_ University (University of Texas at Austin: Ransom Center)
_X_ Other: Specify Repository: _____
(Dallas Public Library - The Hoblitzelle Collection)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 0.600 acres

UTM References:

	Zone	Northing	Easting		Zone	Northing	Easting
A	14	549460	3255120	B			
C				D			
E				F			

Verbal Boundary Description:

The "Majestic" property (consisting of the land only located under both the Majestic Building and the Majestic Theatre) legally described as: A 0.600 acre (26,138 square feet) tract of land out of Lots 3, 4, and 5, New City Block 406 (original City Block 21) San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, being that tract of land effectively described in a Warranty Deed from Hoblitzelle Foundation to Majestic Music Hall, Inc., dated April 27, 1977, recorded in Volume 8071 - page 68 of the Deed Records of Bexar County, Texas, SAVE and EXCEPT the West 0.75 feet of Lot 3, said 0.600 as surveyed, as follows:

BEGINNING at a point in the North right-of-way line of College Street and in the East boundary line of that tract from Hoblitzelle Foundation to Majestic Music Hall, Inc., dated April 27, 1977, and recorded in Volume 8071, at page 68 of the Deed Records of Bexar County, Texas, for the Southeast corner of this tract, said point being 0.10 foot inside the South wall and 0.29 foot inside the East wall of an existing building known as the Majestic Building, whence a point in the East face of the East wall of an existing building, 0.15 foot north of the Southeast corner of said building, the point of intersection of the North right-of-way line of College Street and the West right-of-way line of Navarro Street bears South 89 deg. 42′ 47" East a distance of 175.17 feet and a drill hole in the concrete walk bears South 0 deg. 04′ 03" East a distance of 1.00 foot;

THENCE, North, 0 deg. 08′ 20" West parallel to and 0.75 foot East of, measured at right angles, the West lot line of Lot 3 and the East lot line of Lot 2, New City Block 406, a distance of 159.38 feet to a point in the East face of the distance of 159.38 feet to a point in the East wall of the "Little" Brady Building, 0.11 foot South of the outside face of the North Wall of the "Little" Brady Building, the Northeast corner of that tract of land conveyed to Robert B. Green Memorial Hospital by Bexar County National Bank, at page 882 for the Northeast corner of this tract, whence a drill hole set in concrete bears North, 0. deg. 08" 20" West a distance of 1.00 foot;

THENCE, North 89 deg. 58′ 00" East with the South right-of-way line of Houston Street, at 159.63 feet, a lead plug set in the South curb of Houston Street bears North 0 deg. 04′ 03" East a distance of 15.30 feet, and continuing on the same course and by the same count, in all, a distance of 163.63 feet to a point

lying 0.19 foot inside the North wall and 0.34 foot inside the East wall of the Majestic building, the Northwest corner of that tract of land conveyed to Frank R. Prassel by George W. Oge on November 1, 1973, by deed of record in Volume 7251 at page 431 of the Deed Records of Bexar County, Texas, for the Northeast corner of this tract, whence a drill hole set in concrete bears North 0 deg. 04′ 03" West a distance of 1.00 foot;

THENCE, South 0 deg. 04′ 03" East with the East boundary line of that tract of land referred to as the "Second Tract" in said Warranty Deed from Hoblitzelle Foundation to the Majestic Music Hall, Inc., a distance of 160.29 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary encompasses the original site of the Majestic Theatre and the Majestic Building.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: . Mary Margaret McAllen, Projects Director
Edited by Carolyn Pitts, National Park Service
(202) 343-8166
Org.: . Las Casas Foundation

Date: . September 11, 1992

Street/#: . P.O. Box 15873

City/Town: . San Antonio

State: . Texas

ZIP: . 78212

Telephone: . (512) 223-4343

September 22, 1992

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: MAJESTIC THEATRE

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 230 East Houston Street Not for publication: ____

City/Town: San Antonio Vicinity: ____

State: TX County: Bexar Code: ____ Zip Code: 78205

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: ___
Public-local: X
Public-State: ___
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District: ___
Site: ___
Structure: ___
Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

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

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of related multiple property listing:

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register _____
____ Determined eligible for the National Register _____
____ Determined not eligible for the National Register _____
____ Removed from the National Register _____
____ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Recreation and Culture	Sub:	Theater
Current:	Recreation and Culture	Sub:	Theater Music facility Auditorium
	Commerce/trade		Business

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:
Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals
Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

MATERIALS:

Foundation:	Concrete
Walls:	Brick
Roof:	Concrete (gypsum)
Other:	Cast Stone (trim); Concrete (marquee); Cast-iron (marquee).

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Majestic Theatre opened in June, 1929, as the flagship house of the Interstate Amusement Company chain. It closed briefly in early 1930, but was in continual operation from that date until the late 1970s, when it went dark for two years. It reopened in 1981 as a venue for touring Broadway shows and has been in almost continuous use since.

The theater was built as a part of a 15-story office building, capped by a three-story residential penthouse. The theater occupies parts of the first six floors of the office building.

Originally, the theater had 3700 seats, making it the largest in Texas. In addition to the orchestra level, there are two balconies. The second balcony was designated for black patrons and was served by a separate lobby and elevator located on the opposite side of the block from the main entrance. Use of this balcony was discontinued about 1960. There are plans to restore and reopen it with a larger lobby on the sixth floor of the office building.

The theater was designed by Chicago architect John Eberson. Interior decoration was done by Michelangelo Studios, an Eberson family enterprise. Construction, including demolition of the existing building, excavation for the full basement, and interior decoration, was completed in thirteen months. The theater was the first publicly-accessible building in San Antonio to be air-conditioned.

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Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A___ B___ C___ D___ E___ F___ G___

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M. Period Revivals
2. Spanish (Mission)

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Period(s) of Significance: 1929-1942

Significant Dates:

Significant Person(s):

Cultural Affiliation:

Architect/Builder: John Eberson (1875-1954)

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The opening of the building had a special significance in addition to its theatrical functions. In many ways, it was a symbol of newness, of a progressiveness which San Antonio wished to identify with. This was evident in the opening ceremonies which marked the beginning of "Prosperity Month" in the city. The celebration, largely centered around the Greater Majestic, would "commemorate the era of progress and development that has occurred in this state in recent years." This festival would supposedly draw as many as 500,000 visitors to the city due in part to "reduced railroad fares" in local as well as statewide areas.

... A banquet was held the night of its opening during which prominent citizens and other notable guests praised the accomplishments of the city as well as the new theater. The chief of Staff of the Mexican government, General Tapia, was an honored guest at opening day ceremonies....

Profits from the opening night performance were to be donated to the Children's Hospital Fund, a special project of the San Antonio Junior League. By June 12, two days before the new theater's opening, this group had raised $15,000 through ticket sales. By opening night this amount had risen to $25,000, $5,000 above the expected goal. There was a separation of the profits of the sales which reflected life in the twenties, not only in San Antonio, but in the entire country. The money was divided by theater section with profits from the white section going to the Children's Hospital and those from the black section distributed to the Orphanage and the Campfire Girls.

Advance publicity heralded the opening of the theater and special articles appeared in the June 9, 1929 issue of the San Antonio Express. Headlines of one article symbolized the hyperbole lavished on the opening theater in this way: "Matchless in Beauty and Comfort - Is Beacon of Progress and Symbol of All That is Worthy and Fine."

The San Antonio Majestic Theater opened on June 14, 1929, with pomp and ceremony. In keeping with the new atmosphere surrounding the movies in the late twenties, their new-found glamour and sophistication, the opening of the Greater Majestic brought ads which touted its splendor. Air conditioning, a major attraction in the southwest, was featured prominently in the ad. The concept of "an acre of cool, comfortable seats" was further emphasized by the snow which topped the letters of the theatre's name.[1]

---

[1] Preddy, Jane, "The Greater Majestic Theatre," *Marquee*, Vol. 20, No. 3. Third Quarter, 1988, pp. 5-6.

In 1988, Las Casas Foundation raised $5.5 million to faithfully restore the theater to its original splendor, with precise reproductions of its upholstery, carpeting, seating, plaster and paint treatments. Besides the many experts directing various facets of the project, the son and grandson of the original plaster artisan were hired to perform the restoration of the damaged plaster. Tony Heinsbergen Company of Los Angeles provided consultation on the paint treatments.

The house is filled with a unique and eclectic blend of Roman, Greek, and fantasy statuary heightening the fantasy of the theater setting. The most notable of these statues is a bronze created by the renowned Harriet Whitney Frishmuth, entitled, "Sweet Grapes." The statue was returned to its original location in the Majestic. At this time, funds are being raised to restore the ornamental plaster and tiled mosaic alcove that once adorned the statue. The alcove was removed in the 1940s for a concession stand.

The Majestic has long attracted people from around the world who come to marvel at its beauty or come for first-class entertainment. Since its reopening in 1989, the Majestic has also hosted events for international leaders. In 1990, the spouses of the world leaders attending the 1990 Economic Summit in Houston came with First Lady Barbara Bush to the Majestic for a special performance. President and Mrs. Bush returned in 1991 to host a state dinner in the Majestic for the leaders of seven Latin American countries.

The Majestic is now the cornerstone of the San Antonio Cultural Arts District. It is the home of the San Antonio Symphony and is a venue for Broadway shows and concerts. The theater's uniqueness and the quality of performances presented there have drawn over 750,000 people from San Antonio, South Texas, and from around the United States in the time period between its reopening in September 1989 until September 1992. The Majestic is one of the small group of restored picture palaces that has been given a new life and is once again a show-place in a lively downtown business and entertainment complex.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hall, Ben. *The Best Remaining Seats, The Golden Age of the Movie Palace*, (New York: Decapo), 1988.

Naylor, David. *American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy*, (New York: Nostrand, Reinhold), 1981.

Preddy, Jane. *Palaces of Dreams*, Catalogue for Eberson Exhibit-McNay Museum of Art, San Antonio, Texas, (New York: Abrams Gleber Warhover), 1989.

The Theater Catalog, 1948-1949. (Philadelphia: J. Emanuel Publications).

"John Eberson," *National Cyclopedia of American Biography*. (New York: James T. White & Co.) Vol. XL, pp. 562-63.

"The Greater Majestic Theatre" *Marquee*. Preddy, Jane. Vol. 20, No. 3 (Columbus: The Journal of the Theatre Historical Society of America), Third Quarter, 1988.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ 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:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office (Texas State Historical Commission)
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
_X_ Local Government
_X_ University (University of Texas at Austin: Ransom Center)
_X_ Other (Specify Repository):
(Dallas Public Library-The Hoblitzelle Collection)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 0.6 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing

A 14 549460 3255120

Verbal Boundary Description:

The "Majestic" property (consisting of the land only located under both the Majestic Building and the Majestic Theatre) legally described as: A 0.600 acre (26,138 square feet) tract of land out of Lots 3, 4, and 5, New City Block 406 (original City Block 21) San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, being that tract of land effectively described in a Warranty Deed from Hoblitzelle Foundation to Majestic Music Hall, Inc., dated April 27, 1977, recorded in Volume 8071 - page 68 of the Deed Records of Bexar County, Texas, SAVE and EXCEPT the West 0.75 feet of Lot 3, said 0.600 as surveyed, as follows:

BEGINNING at a point in the North right-of-way line of College Street and in the East boundary line of that tract from Hoblitzelle Foundation to Majestic Music Hall, Inc., dated April 27, 1977, and recorded in Volume 8071, at page 68 of the Deed Records of Bexar County, Texas, for the Southeast corner of this tract, said point being 0.10 foot inside the South wall and 0.29 foot inside the East wall of an existing building known as the Majestic Building, whence a point in the East face of the East wall of an existing building, 0.15 foot north of the Southeast corner of said building, the point of intersection of the North right-of-way line of College Street and the West right-of-way line of Navarro Street bears South 89 deg. 42′ 47" East a distance of 175.17 feet and a drill hole in the concrete walk bears South 0 deg. 04′ 03" East a distance of 1.00 foot;

THENCE, North, 0 deg. 08′ 20" West parallel to and 0.75 foot East of, measured at right angles, the West lot line of Lot 3 and the East lot line of Lot 2, New City Block 406, a distance of 159.38 feet to a point in the East face of the distance of 159.38 feet to a point in the East wall of the "Little" Brady Building, 0.11 foot South of the outside face of the North Wall of the "Little" Brady Building, the Northeast corner of that tract of land conveyed to Robert B. Green Memorial Hospital by Bexar County National Bank, at page 882 for the Northeast corner of this tract, whence a drill hole set in concrete bears North, 0. deg. 08" 20" West a distance of 1.00 foot;

THENCE, North 89 deg. 58′ 00" East with the South right-of-way line of Houston Street, at 159.63 feet, a lead plug set in the South curb of Houston Street bears North 0 deg. 04′ 03" East a distance of 15.30 feet, and continuing on the same course and by the same count, in all, a distance of 163.63 feet to a point lying 0.19 foot inside the North wall and 0.34 foot inside the

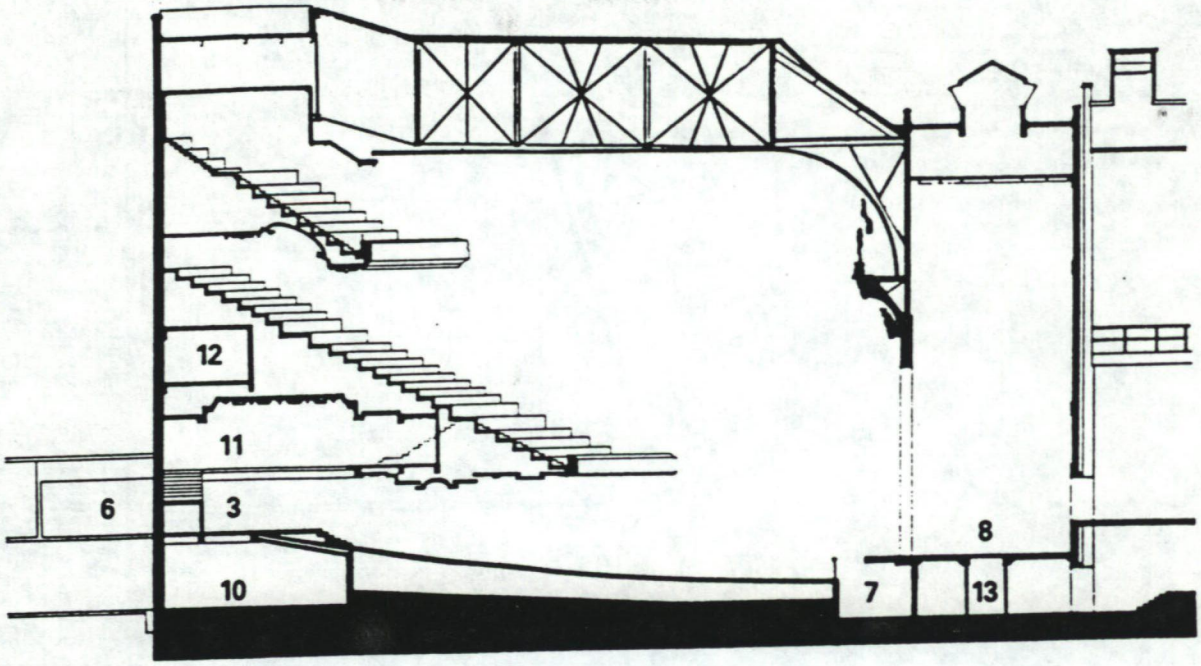
East wall of the Majestic building, the Northwest corner of that tract of land conveyed to Frank R. Prassel by George W. Oge on November 1, 1973, by deed of record in Volume 7251 at page 431 of the Deed Records of Bexar County, Texas, for the Northeast corner of this tract, whence a drill hole set in concrete bears North 0 deg. 04′ 03" West a distance of 1.00 foot;

THENCE, South 0 deg. 04′ 03" East with the East boundary line of that tract of land referred to as the "Second Tract" in said Warranty Deed from Hoblitzelle Foundation to the Majestic Music Hall, Inc., a distance of 160.29 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING.

Boundary Justification:

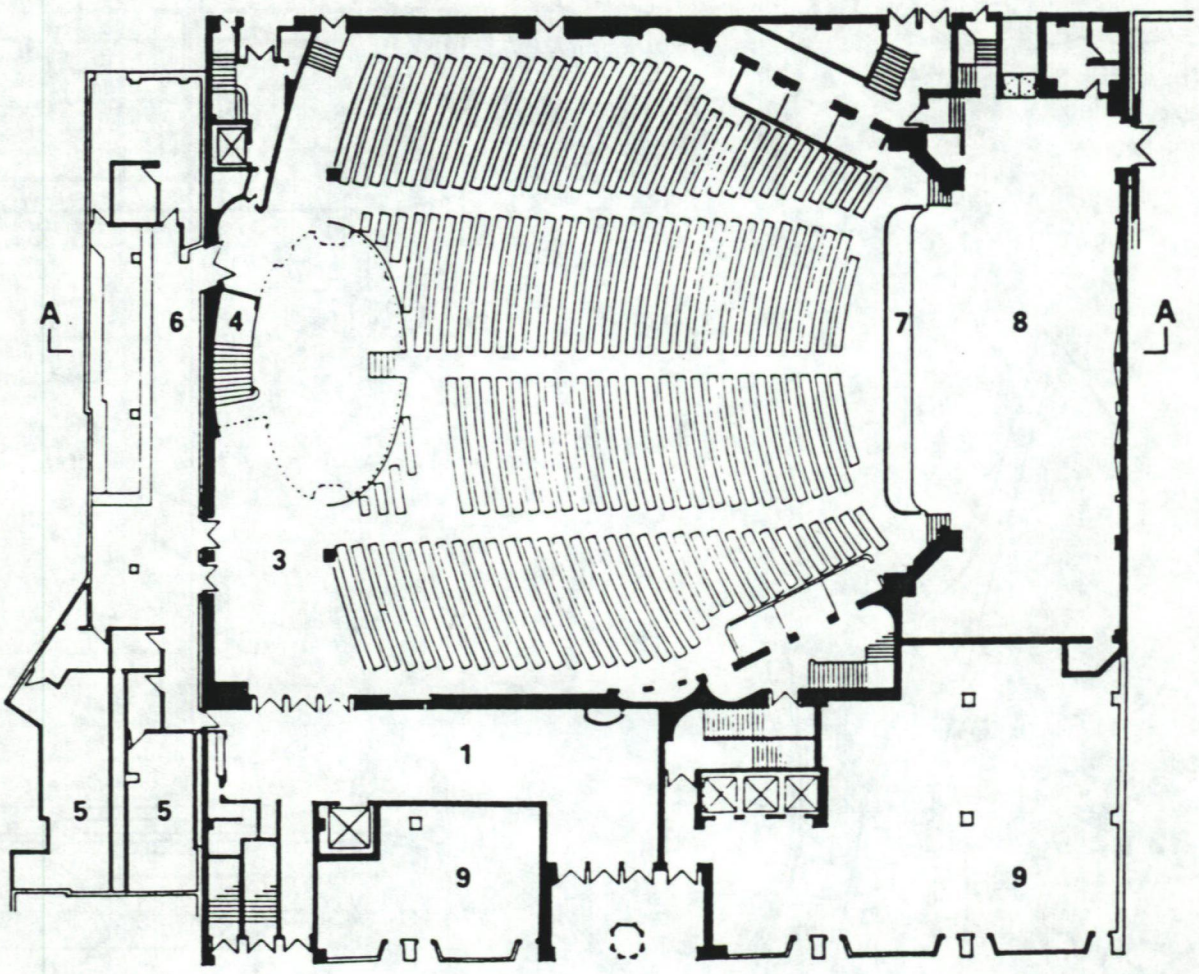
The boundary encompasses the original site of the Majestic Theatre and the Majestic Building.

Majestic Theatre - San Antonio, Texas



SECTION A-A

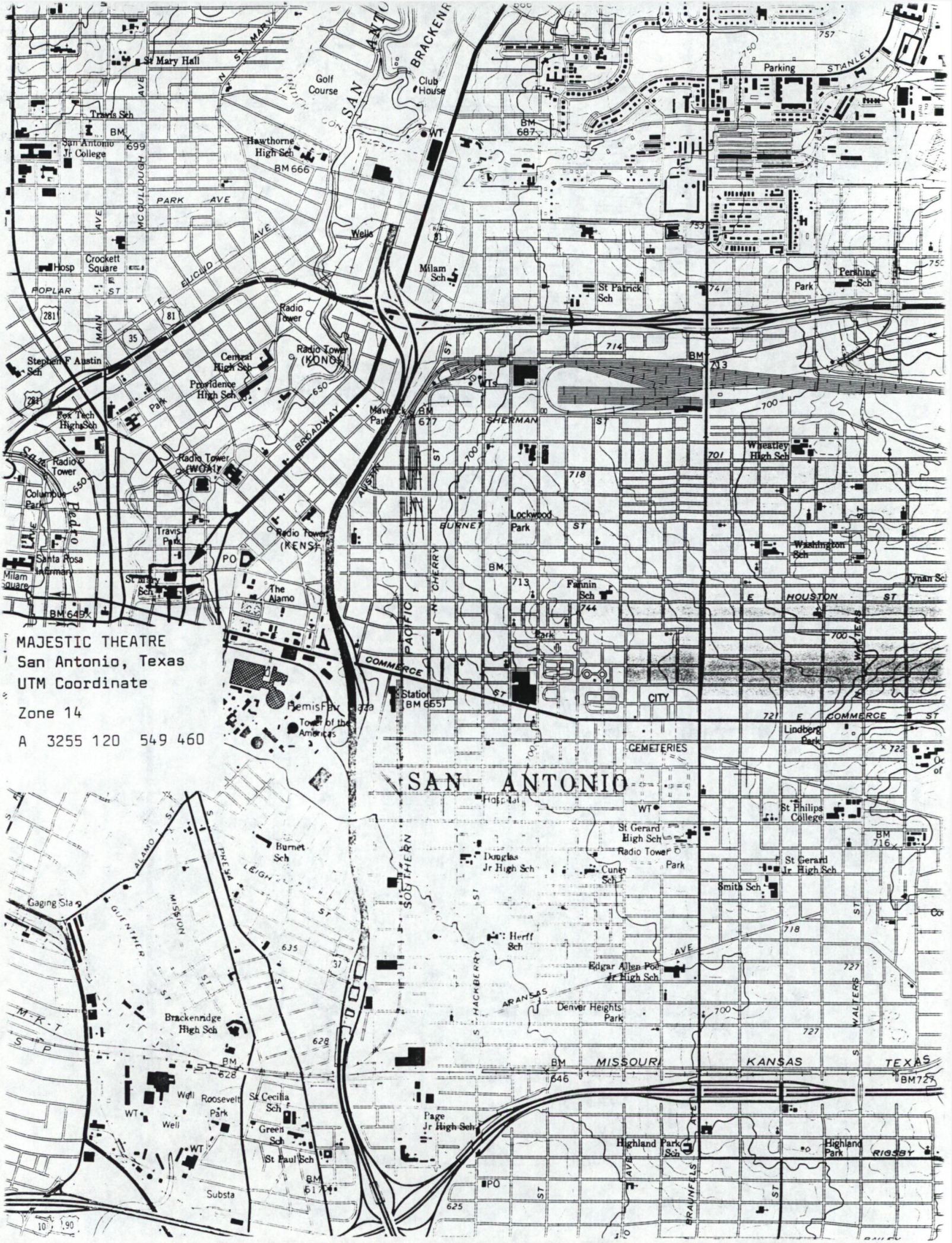
1 LOBBY
2 ELEVATOR
3 FOYER
4 STAIRS TO BALCONY
5 RESTROOMS
6 LOUNGE
7 ORCHESTRA PIT
8 STAGE
9 RETAIL
10 OFFICES
11 BALCONY FOYER
12 THIRD LEVEL FOYER
13 DRESSING ROOMS



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

N

40'/12m


MAJESTIC THEATRE
San Antonio, Texas
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St Mary Hall
Golf Course
Club House
Travis Sch
San Antonio Jr College
Hawthorne High Sch
BM 666
BM 687
WT
Parking
STANLEY
PARK AVE
McCULLOUGH AVE
ELMIRA
ELCLID AVE
Wells
Milam Sch
St Patrick Sch
Pershing Park
Sch
Hosp
Crockett Square
POPLAR ST
MAIN AVE
Radio Tower
Radio Tower (KONO)
Central High Sch
Providence High Sch
Stephen F Austin Sch
Park
Rex Tech High Sch
Maverick Park
BM 677
SHERMAN ST
BROADWAY
Radio Tower (WOAI)
Radio Tower
Columbus Park
Travis Park
Radio Tower (KENS)
PO
Santa Rosa Infirmary
Milam Square
St Mary's Sch
The Alamo
BM 649
AUSTIN ST
PACIFIC
N CHERRY
BURNET ST
Lockwood Park
Fannin Sch
Wheatley High Sch
Washington Sch
Tynan Sch
E HOUSTON ST
WALTERS
COMMERCE ST
Station (BM 655)
CITY
HemisFair Plaza
Tower of the Americas
Lindberg Park
E COMMERCE ST
CEMETERIES
Hospital
St Philips College
St Gerard High Sch
Radio Tower
Park
Douglas Jr High Sch
Cuney Sch
St Gerard Jr High Sch
Smith Sch
BM 716
SOUTHERN
S HACKBERRY ST
Herff Sch
Edgar Allen Poe Jr High Sch
ARANSAS AVE
Denver Heights Park
MISSOURI
KANSAS
TEXAS
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11. FORM PREPARED BY

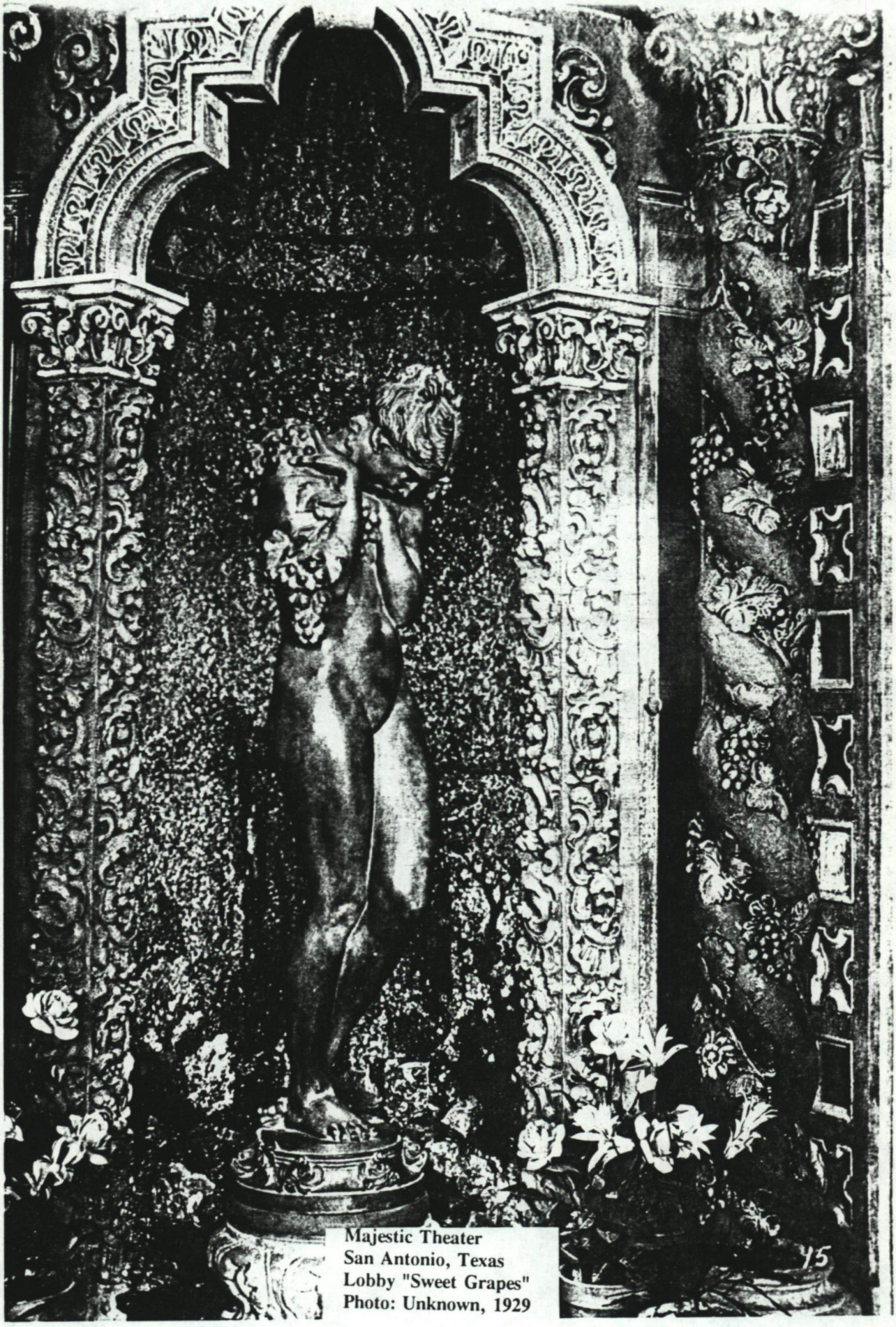
Name/Title: Mary Margaret McAllen, Projects Director
Org.: Las Casas Foundation
Street/#: P.O. Box 15873
City/Town: San Antonio
State: Texas
ZIP: 78212
Telephone: (512) 223-4343
Date: September 11, 1992

Edited by: Carolyn Pitts, National Park Service
(202) 343-8166

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Facade
Photo: Harvey Patteson, 1929

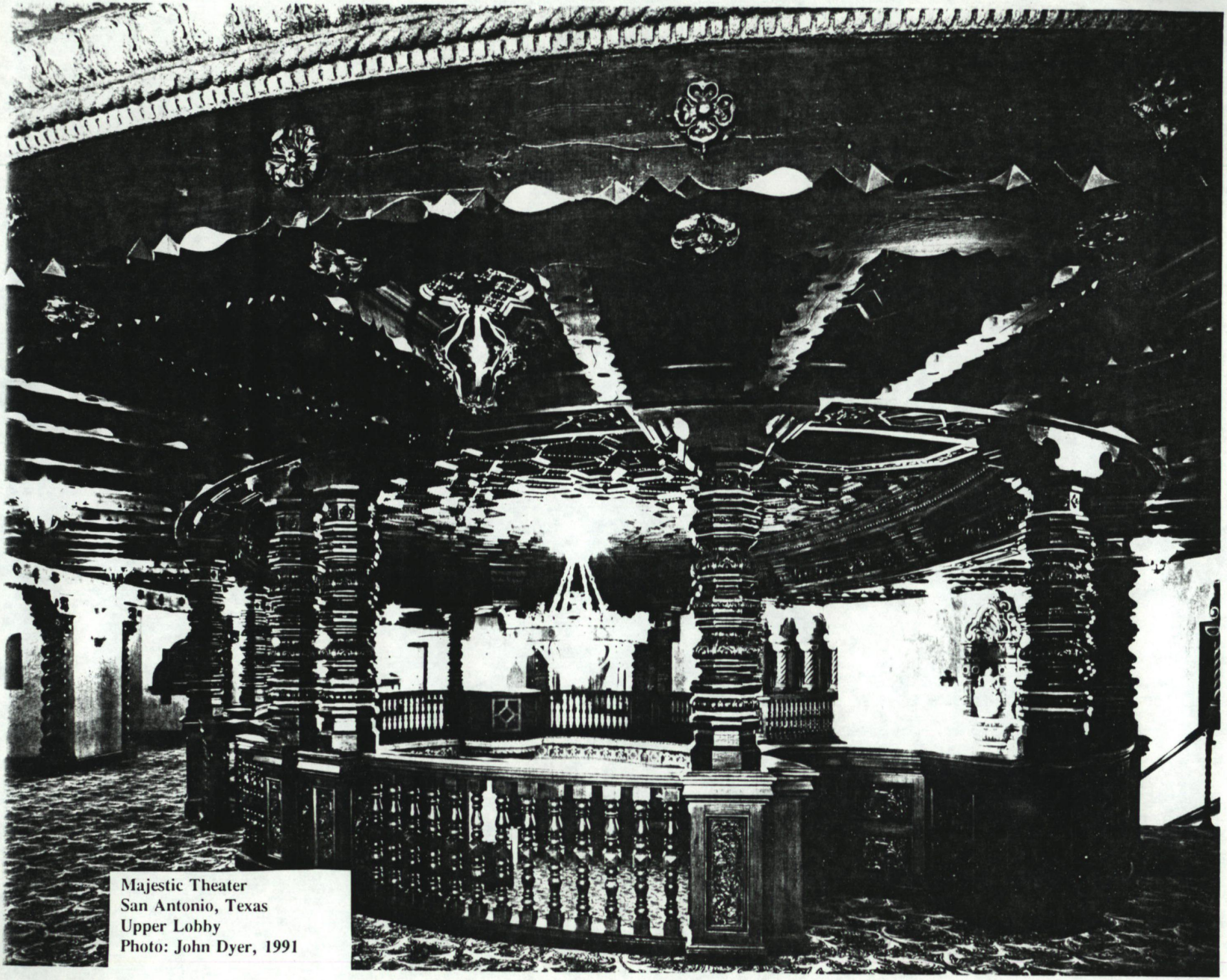
Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Ticket Kiosk
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Outer Lobby
Photo: John Dyer, 1991

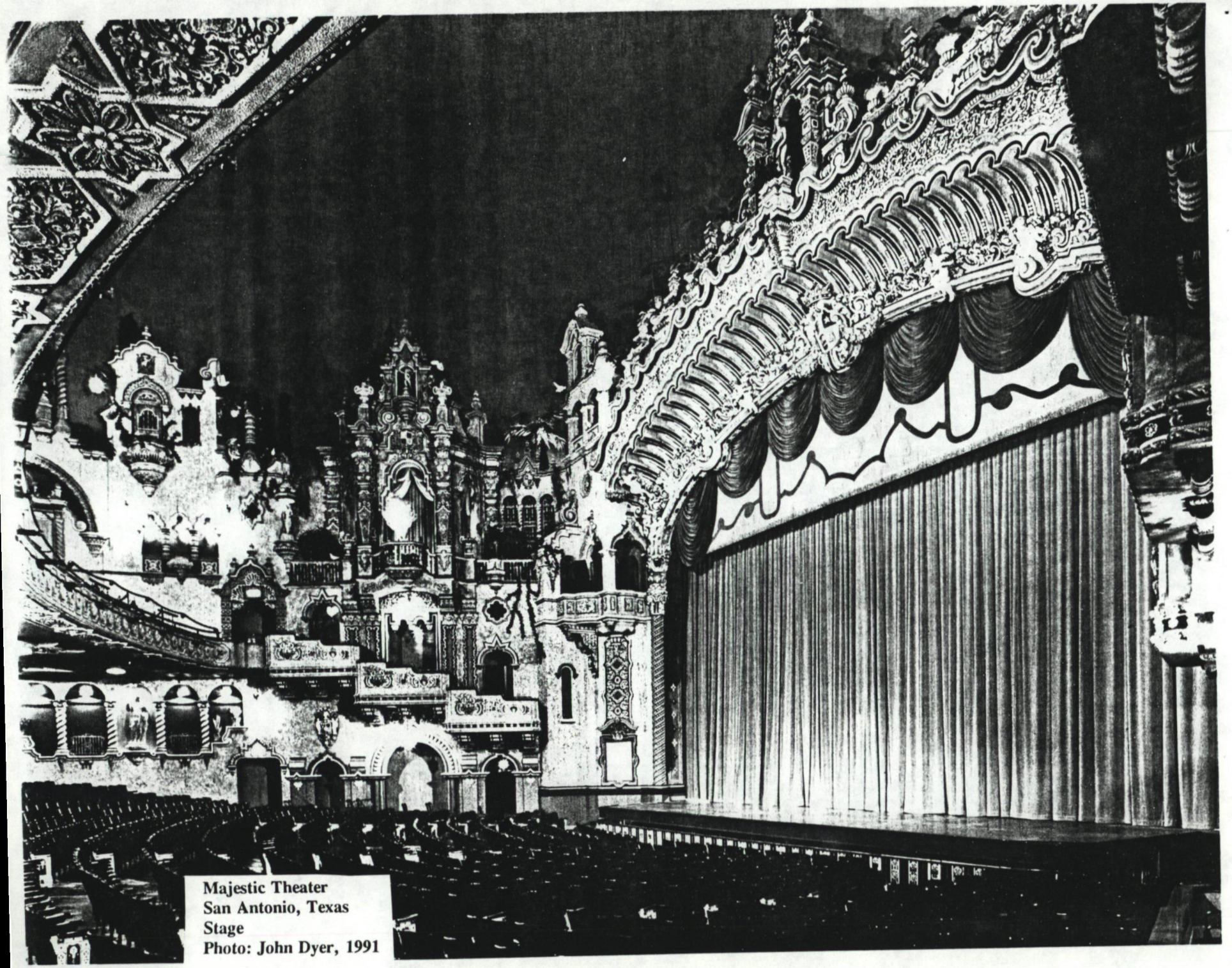


Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Lobby "Sweet Grapes"
Photo: Unknown, 1929

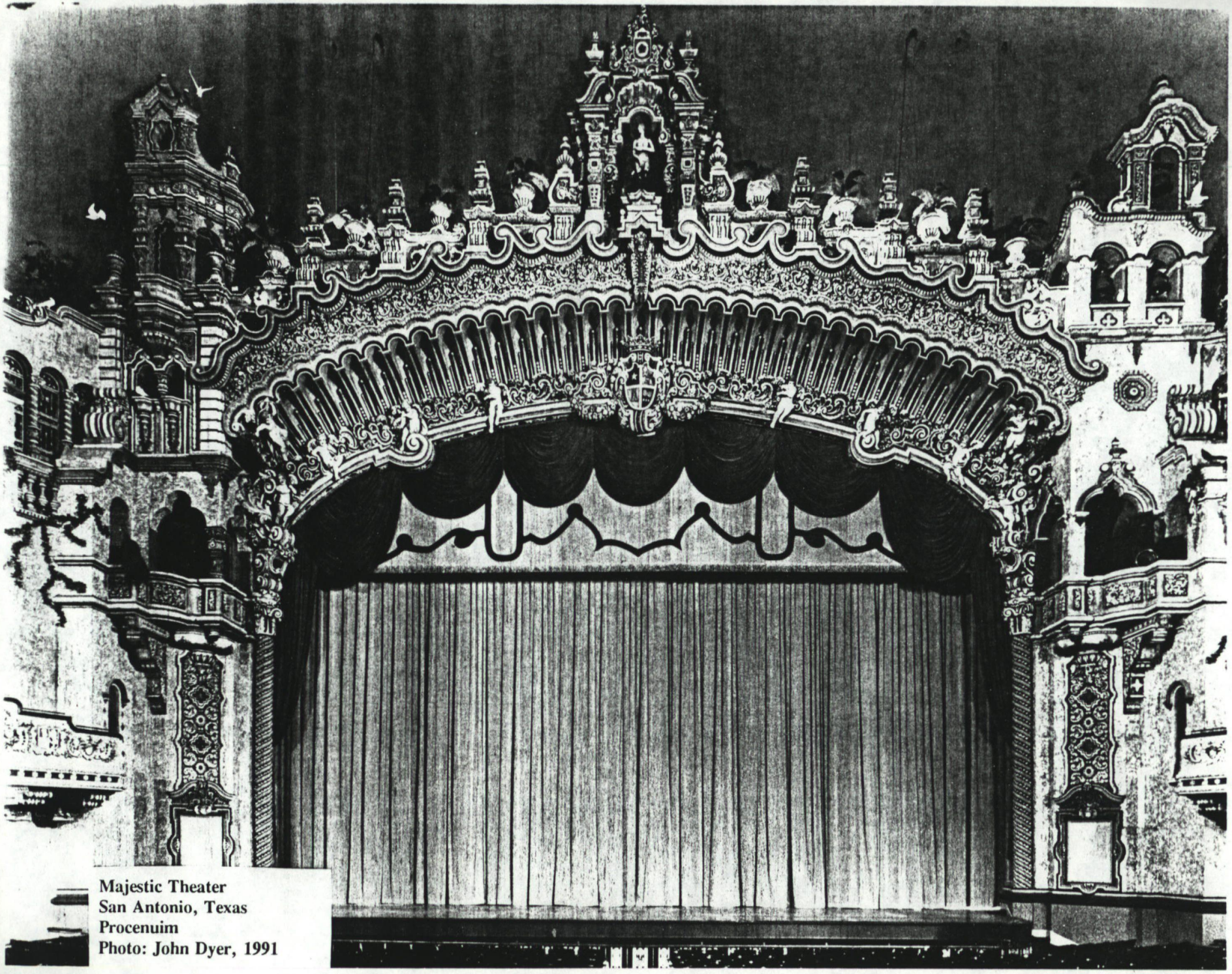
Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Lobby
Photo: John Dyer, 1991



Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Upper Lobby
Photo: John Dyer, 1991



Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Stage
Photo: John Dyer, 1991



Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
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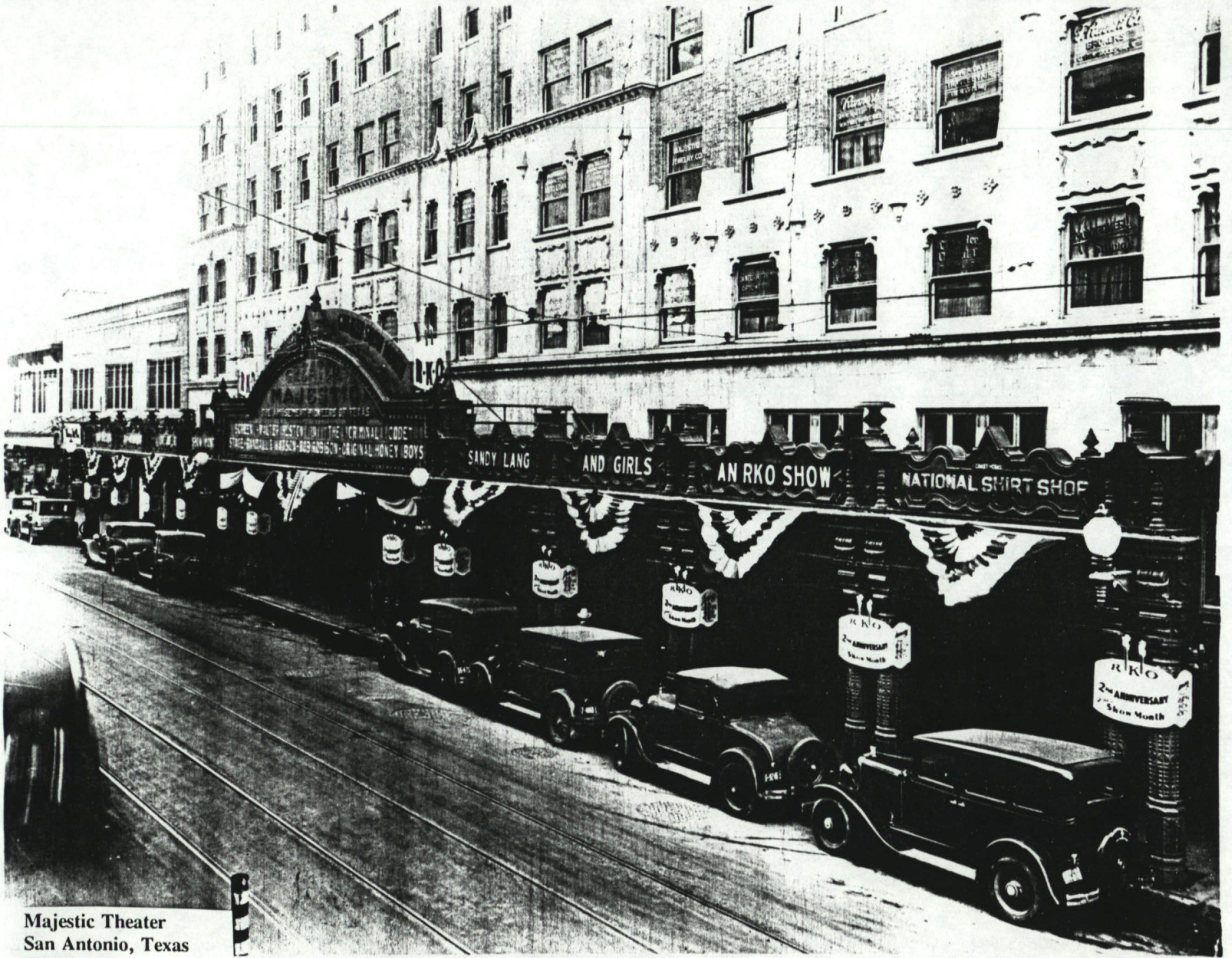
Photo: John Dyer, 1991



Majestic Theater
San Antonio, Texas
Exterior
Photo: Unknown, 1930

LAS CASAS

January 1991

MAJESTIC THEATRE

HISTORY/DESIGN FEATURES

Location: 216 E. Houston St.

History:

- Built in 1929 as the flagship of Karl Hoblitzelle's Interstate Amusement Co.
- Architect was John Eberson. The Majestic was Eberson's second atmospheric* theatre in Texas and is the only one remaining in the state.
- At its completion, the Majestic was the largest theatre in Texas.
- Its opening on June 14, 1929, coincided with the beginning of "Prosperity Month" in San Antonio.
- "Fox Movietone Follies of 1929" was the featured film for the grand opening. Proceeds went to the Junior League of San Antonio and the Ella Austin Center.
- There were originally 3,700 seats.
- Closed as a movie theatre in 1974.
- Designated National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

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*Eberson developed the concept of the atmospheric theatre in the early 1920s. The concept is that upon entering the theatre auditorium, one leaves a building and enters a picturesque village plaza at twilight, changing to starlight as the feature begins. Every conceivable design device is used to enhance this fantasy. Eberson wrote: "To be a successful theatre architect, one must be a showman....I want to create theatres where pictures can be enjoyed in restful and beautiful surroundings rather than one that would be a mere flaunt of lavishness."

-more-

History, Cont.:

. Donated to the Majestic Foundation by Hoblitzelle Foundation in 1976.

. Reopened as Majestic Performing Arts Center in 1981, bringing Broadway shows such as "Amadeus," "Cats," "Tango Argentino" and "The Sound of Music" to San Antonio.

. The theatre closed for restoration in Nov. 1989.

. Phase I construction began in January 1989 and was completed to coincide with the September 1989 60th anniversary of the Majestic Theatre and the 50th anniversary of the San Antonio Symphony.

Auditorium:

. The "village" into which one steps upon entering the auditorium is clearly Mediterranean; the style is a conglomeration of Moorish and Spanish Revival. The "architecture" of the house left wall is completely different from that of the right. There are towers, oriels, balconies, tile roofs, brackets, scrolls, arches and columns of various architectural styles, railings, urns, finials in profusion, statues, bells, garlands and even a working fountain -- all in plaster.

. Surface textures and colors are artfully contrived to produce a soft, weathered appearance. Lighting sources are discreetly dispersed throughout the architecture, sometimes lighting the facades in a realistic manner, sometimes purely for ornamental effect. Real Italian cypress, palms, flowering shrubs and trailing vines -- preserved and highlighted with paint -- contribute to the naturalistic effect, as do stuffed peacocks and other colorful birds.

. The lobby and foyer areas are partially hung with antique tapestries. Originally, they were furnished with antique European furniture.

Ceiling: The ceiling is a plaster vaulted "sky" which turns down behind the architecture on the sides and the proscenium ahead. Electric stars wink through openings in the plaster and a Viennese cloud machine sweeps the sky with changing cloud patterns.

Balconies: The balcony soffits include a series of shallow, lighted domes with hidden air conditioning grills.

Lobbies and foyers:

. The lobbies and foyers, on three different levels, are like palatial interiors from which one passes into the "plaza" of the auditorium. At the orchestra level, one looks over a railing as though from a balcony overlooking the plaza. At the upper levels, passage is through archways with finely wrought iron railings.

. In the lobbies also, all is plaster -- cross vaults, coffers textured to look like rough-cut wood, arches, columns, brackets occur in profusion. Relatively low ceilings are visually heightened by shallow, indirectly lit domes in a variety of baroque configurations. An elliptical opening is cut through one lobby floor to create a rotunda with a heavily modeled coffered ceiling and an enormous iron chandelier. Curving, carpeted, marble stairways with wood or iron railings connect the lobby levels.

. The outer lobby includes a huge aquarium and originally featured an elaborate architectural fountain on one wall featuring a statue known as "Sweet Grapes". The statue remains but the fountain was removed in the 1950s to provide space for a popcorn stand. Both "Sweet Grapes" and an antique urn displayed in a niche on the stairway are in the theatre on loan from the Hoblitzelle Foundation.

Lounges: The decor in the men's and women's lounges resembles that of palatial residential rooms. Some of the original furniture remains.

-more-

Entrance: The Houston Street canopy has a concrete coffered ceiling, with rough-wood texture, on baroque twisted columns of cast iron. The outdoor ticket kiosk has the form of a Moorish pavilion with marble base paneling, cast iron twisted columns and ornamental plaster crestings at the roof line.

Organ: The original organ machinery and console remain as do most of the pipes, concealed in chambers behind the architecture of the side walls of the auditorium.

Technical details:

- 1,800,000 cubic feet of space in auditorium.
- Widely acclaimed acoustic properties.

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For additional information, contact:

Nancy Scott Jones
Nancy Scott Jones Public Relations
512/222-1615

LAS CASAS

January 1991

EMPIRE THEATRE

HISTORY/DESIGN FEATURES

Location: 226 N. St. Mary's, at the intersection of Houston Street and St. Mary's.

History: Built by Thomas Brady in 1914. Architects were Mauran, Russell and Crowe of St. Louis.

The land the Empire is on has been used for theatrical purposes since 1879 -- the Turner Opera House, Riche's Opera House, Houston Street Theatre, Alhambra Theatre and finally the Empire.

Originally 813 seats on first floor, 603 in first balcony and 350 in second balcony.

Opened December 14, 1914 with film "Neptune's Daughter."

Last movie shown in mid-1970s.

Acquired through NCNB Texas in 1988.

Walls and ceiling: Early photographs show an interior with plaster surfaces in a single, light color, contrasting mahogany doors and trim, dark-colored draperies and dark wood trim on the seats.

The ceiling consists of plaster planes divided into a series of trapezoidal and triangular panels by elaborate plaster moldings. A continuous pierced plaster grill, part of the original forced air ventilation system, is incorporated.

-more-

Walls and ceiling, Cont'd.: The side walls are plaster, divided into panels by ornamental pilasters and wainscot moldings, with a heavy plaster crown molding.

Proscenium: The proscenium is very high with an almost-square opening framed by an elaborate series of moldings with applied medallions. Plaster ornament here, as elsewhere, is generally Renaissance Revival in style and remains in very good condition.

Boxes: The proscenium is flanked by square-headed openings, heavily modeled with scrolled brackets. Panels over the openings contain bold plaster cartouches. Originally draped, these openings each contain three "opera" boxes which step down toward the stage, cantilevered on brackets decorated with volutes. A tall, draped doorway provided entrance to each box. Below these boxes, at orchestra level, are boxes separated from the rest of the orchestra-level seating by low partitions.

Balconies: The soffits of both balconies incorporate recessed, indirect lighting fixtures trimmed with plaster moldings and, originally, ceiling fans. The fascias are of heavily ornamented plaster and feature bare-bulb light fixtures set into plaster rosettes. The fascias are topped with brass railings.

Lobby/Foyers: The original theatre entrance-way was removed long ago, but the lobby, located to one side at the back of the house, remains with its restrained and elegant plaster ornament all intact. Open stairs, with marble treads, rise from the back of the orchestra level to the balconies. The lobby at the first balcony level has been stripped of all ornament. The second balcony has no lobby.

-more-

Marquee: The marquee, suspended on heavy chains from the building wall, remains, but in a dilapidated state. Most of the copper trim has been lost, but enough remains to serve as models. A copper eagle with wings outspread, originally mounted atop the marquee over the theatre entrance, was removed by a previous owner, but has been located in storage. The original reader board at the theatre entrance is gone.

Doors and Woodwork: Most of the wood trim and doors in the theatre are of mahogany. The exit doors have mirrored lights. Original decorative exit lights remain at the balcony level.

Organ: The original organ was donated to Baylor University in the 1960s by a previous building owner. The original location of the organ chambers remains a mystery; an early remodeling closed off the balcony-level boxes for this use.

Technical details: The auditorium has a comfortable, intimate feeling. Sight lines are excellent. No seat at the orchestra level is farther than 55 feet from the proscenium; no seat in the first balcony is farther than 70 feet from the proscenium.

The fly gallery is intact, but the grid requires reinforcement and all rigging requires replacement.

Total theatre space - 28,000 square feet

###

For additional information, contact:

Nancy Scott Jones
Nancy Scott Jones Public Relations
512/222-1615

CURTIS TUNNELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 12276 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711 (512)463-6100

January 30, 1991

Mary Margaret McAllen
Las Casas Foundation
315 E. Commerce, #309
San Antonio, TX 78205

RE: THE MAJESTIC THEATER
212 E. Houston St., San Antonio
16" x 12" medallion and plate w/o post
Job #25190

Dear Ms. McAllen:

This letter is to notify you that the State Marker Committee has reviewed and approved the above-referenced structure for the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) designation. This special status, awarded to properties deemed worthy of preservation for their architectural integrity and historical associations, conveys a measure of legal protection to the building. Notification of any modifications to the exterior of this structure should be made to the Texas Historical Commission at least 60 days prior to the commencement of work. Please refer to the enclosed brochure for further information on the RTHL designation.

At this time payment for the marker is due. A check, in the amount of $324.00 ($300.00 if paid for by a tax-exempt organization) should be made payable to the Texas Historical Commission and sent to the letterhead address as soon as possible. Once payment is received, the application will be placed in line to have the marker inscription written. The inscription will not be prepared until after funds have been received. When the text is written, a copy will be sent to you and any parties listed below for review.

The Texas Historical Commission wishes to congratulate you on the preservation of this fine structure and appreciates your effort to record Texas history in this manner.

Sincerely,

Frances Rickard

Frances Rickard, Director
State Marker Program

FR/ap

pc: Henry A. Guerra, Jr., Bexar County Historical Commission

LAS CASAS

Majestic

Telephoned 7/30/91

July 10, 1991

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Mary Margaret McAllen
Projects Director

Sissy Tietz
Volunteer Coordinator

Mr. Edwin C. Dearss
Chief Historian
National Park Service
History Division (418)
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Mr. Dearss:

In September 1989, Las Casas Foundation proudly reopened the Majestic Theatre in San Antonio, Texas after an extensive restoration. The total $5.5 million project has created a permanent home for the San Antonio Symphony and a venue for Broadway shows and concerts.

The Majestic is one of the last atmospheric theatres remaining in the United States. Designed by John Eberson and built at a cost of $3 million, the Majestic was intended to be the most ornate and modern building in South Texas. The interior is a village courtyard setting of Spanish Mission and Baroque architecture mixed with Greek and Roman motifs. The fantasy environment is enhanced by a collection of statuary, angels, twinkling stars and drifting clouds in the "sky."

In the past and now in the present, the Majestic has had a huge impact on the quality of life for San Antonio and South Texas. Almost every person in the community has a favorite memory about the theatre. The Majestic is now known nationally and internationally. First Lady Barbara Bush attended our grand reopening and returned a year later with the spouses of the Economic Summit.

We request that the Majestic Theatre be considered as a registered National Landmark. The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on October 10, 1975. Although listed in the register at 212 E. Houston Street, renumbering of the streets puts the Majestic at 230 E. Houston Street. As an update to the material on file with the National Register, enclosed please find a press kit and current photos since its restoration.

Thank you for your consideration. We cordially invite you for a visit to the Majestic Theatre, if your schedule

JUL 23 1991

LAS CASAS ◇ A Foundation for the Preservation and Restoration of Buildings for Cultural Use
P.O. Box 15873, San Antonio, Texas 78212 ◇ (512)223-4343

permits. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Jocelyn Straus

Jocelyn L. Straus
Founding Chairman

Enclosures

7/25/91

Mr Bearss:

Barry gave this to me yesterday in your absence.
This looks like a very good candidate to me-
It certainly ranks with the Paramount in Oakland
and the Ohio Theatre in Columbus.

If you OK, I will call San Antonio

Carolyn Please do as recommended ES

7/31/91

Ben:

This arrived in your absence. I looked it over, checked around and it sounds like it is eligible. The Texas SHPO agrees – they are also sending me a list of potential architectural NHL's. I have called Ms. McAllen and put it on my list.

C.

Return package to me.

thanks Carolyn--

Please prepare a response to the request for study.

B

Bleary 10/10/91

10/10

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OCT 11 1991

Ms. Jocelyn L. Straus
Founding Chairman
Las Casas
PO Box 15873
San Antonio, TX 78212

Dear Ms. Straus:

Thank you for your recent letter concerning the National Historic Landmarks Survey. We very much appreciated the material you sent on the Majestic Theater in San Antonio. As we indicated by telephone, we will be adding it to our list of structures that are eligible for study as potential NHLs under the theme of architecture. Our architectural historian, Carolyn Pitts will keep you informed concerning her schedule.

Enclosed find an explanatory sheet describing the National Historic Landmarks Survey.

Sincerely,

Edwin C. Bearss

Edwin C. Bearss
Chief Historian

Enclosure

cc: TX SHPO

bcc:
001 RF
400 RF
400 Bowers
418 Majestic Theater NHL Pending

FNP:Cpitts:wa:10/08/91
WA 305

LAS CASAS

Majestic Empire

JAN 30 1992

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20 January 1992

Mr. Edwin C. Bearss
Chief Historian
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Mr. Bearss:

In regard to the Majestic Theatre's consideration as a National Historic Landmark, we have received notice that a site inspection of the theatre by Ms. Caroline Pitts is in order.

Per our conversation, Monday, March 30, 1992 is a mutually convenient time for her inspection of the Majestic and we request that she visit us at that time. Please let us know how we may help to accommodate her arrival and stay.

Thank you for your assistance. In the event that you need any additional information, please contact us at (512) 223-4343. We look forward to Ms. Pitt's visit to San Antonio.

Sincerely,

Jocelyn L. Straus

Jocelyn L. Straus
Founding Chairman

LAS CASAS ◇ A Foundation for the Preservation and Restoration of Buildings for Cultural Use
P.O. Box 15873, San Antonio, Texas 78212 ◇ (512)223-4343

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31 March 1992

Ms. Caroline Pitts
Architectural Historian
History Division
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Caroline:

It was a great pleasure to have you to the Majestic Theatre for a tour yesterday. We are appreciative of the time you were able to take to come see our theatre and San Antonio.

As promised, I'm sending this supplemental materials about the Majestic to you there for your records.

We shall begin working on the information for your office right away. I look forward to speaking to you about the particulars.

Meanwhile, thank you again for your visit. I hope it was pleasurable and is only the first of many visits to San Antonio.

Singerely,

Mary Margaret

Mary Margaret McAllen
Projects Director

Enclosures

LAS CASAS

Majestic Empire

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2 June 1992

Ms. Carolyn Pitts
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Carolyn:

Please find enclosed the updated National Register form. We have included the criteria you have requested and hopefully have interpreted the correct form as we answered the specific areas.

Thank you for reviewing this for us. Please let me know if we should reconstruct some areas or if we are too detailed or not detailed enough in some areas.

We enjoyed having you here for your brief visit. We hope your travel went well.

My telephone number is (512) 223-4343. I look forward to hearing your critique. Please let us know what the next steps are in the landmark approval process.

Sincerely,

Mary Margaret

Mary Margaret McAllen
Projects Director

Enclosure

LAS CASAS ◇ A Foundation for the Preservation and Restoration of Buildings for Cultural Use
P.O. Box 15873, San Antonio, Texas 78212 ◇ (512)223-4343

Speaking of Texas

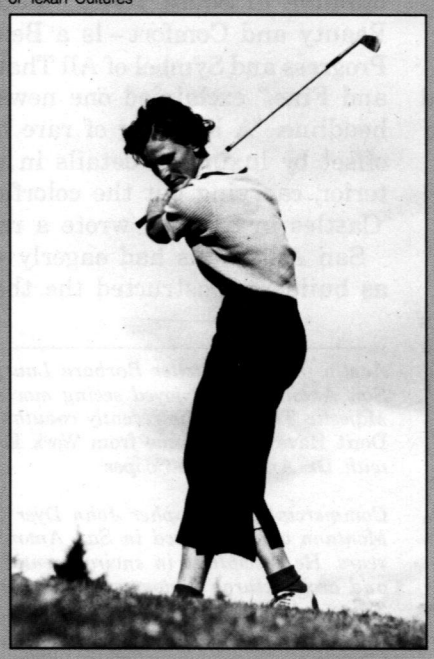
■ In 1909, 500 families came to Texas after buying land as a result of a shady promotion offered by the Provident Land Company of Kansas City, Missouri. Hoping to sell off about 20,000 acres, the company advertised in the Midwest using photographs showing incredible farming results purported to come from its holdings in Colorado County. The would-be farmers founded the town of Provident City, which soon boasted 21 businesses, two churches, a school, bank, post office, Woodmen of the World Lodge, and a baseball team.

Just as quickly as it boomed, the town dwindled. Realizing that the land could not support farming, the disgruntled, bankrupt settlers left. Four years after its founding, all that remained of the town was the Provident City Hotel, which was later converted into a ranch headquarters. – *Cynthia J. Beeman, Historian, Texas Historical Commission*

■ Folks have always preferred riding to walking, and in the days when Texas was a frontier, men prided themselves on their horsemanship. Of the 95,000 men of military age in Civil War Texas, almost 59,000 of them joined cavalry units, riding their own or donated horses. Though the state established camps to train infantry, horseback proved the preferred way to fight, creating a shortage of foot soldiers. In 1862, the 6th Texas Cavalry Battalion and the 13th, 16th, 18th, 22nd, 24th, 25th, and 28th Texas Cavalry Regiments were unhorsed, amid vehement protests by the men. When officers ordered A.W. Terrell's Cavalry Regiment in Richmond to dismount in August 1863, protests grew even stronger, and a September 11 order to unhorse more men resulted in mutiny. Ninety-one men rode their horses home or joined other cavalry units. Twenty-five of the mutineers were later tried, but only the officers were punished. – *Cindi Myers, Wimberley*

■ The Babe Didrikson Zaharias Memorial and Museum in Beaumont honors the greatest female athlete of the first half of the 20th Century. The museum, a simple round white building, forms the center circle in a design that suggests the Olympic symbol. The other circles, made of concrete bordered with shrubs, contain fountains or flags. The museum houses mementos of Babe's three-time All-American basketball ratings, her six Woman Athlete of the Year recognitions by the Associated Press, her Olympic Medals, and the trophies from 82 golf tournament victories. Babe died of cancer at age 42 in September 1956, but her memory lives on as an inspiration to all athletes. – *Jeff Carroll, Weimar*

Courtesy *The San Antonio Light* Collection, The Institute of Texan Cultures



Mildred "Babe" Didrikson Zaharias plays an exhibition round of golf at San Antonio's Willow Springs Golf Course in 1935. The photograph was published in *The San Antonio Light* on October 22, 1935.

■ In late 1838, Texas republic President Sam Houston received complimentary tickets to a performance of his namesake city's new theater company. He arrived late at the crowded performance to find the seats reserved for the presidential party occupied by a teacher and her students whose seats had been taken by a group of gamblers. The embarrassed theater manager ordered the men to give up their seats, and called for the police. When the sheriff arrived with a group of soldiers, the gamblers drew their weapons, and it seemed a fight would follow. Houston silenced the house by standing on a chair and ordering the soldiers to lay down their weapons. He declared that he would take a seat at the back of the house. The gamblers, thus shamed, said they would leave with a refund of their ticket money, and, with peace restored, the show went on as planned. – *Cindi Myers, Wimberley*

■ Today, in downtown San Antonio, you can't help noticing the pyramid-topped, octagonal Tower Life Building (formerly known as the Smith-Young Tower, or the Transit Tower). Constructed in 1929, and for 30 years the tallest building in the city, it sits on what used to be Bowen's Island in the San Antonio River. In the 1890s, you could cross a bridge to the island at the Old Mill Crossing and dine, fish, or swim at Wolfram's Garden. Until World War I, San Antonians flocked to the island for circuses, carnivals, and rodeos, and to attend German songfests. – *Frank W. Jennings, San Antonio*

Texas Highways
Nov 1990
Vol 37 No 11

HER MAJESTY REIGNS IN SAN ANTONIO

A midnight-blue sky flickering with hundreds of stars. . .a castle wall bedecked with ornately carved towers, arches, opera boxes, terraces, and statues. . .a snow-white peacock perched on a balcony railing. San Antonians sought to preserve these scenes when they donated more than $4.5 million for the restoration and reopening of the Majestic Theatre. Now, as the first permanent home of the San Antonio Symphony and the site of frequent Broadway shows, the 61-year-old "picture palace" again enchants audiences of all ages.

When First Lady Barbara Bush hosted the spouses of the Economic Summit in July, the Majestic Theatre was one of the three historic sites in San Antonio she picked for them to visit, ranking the Majestic right up there with the Alamo and the San José Mission. Her choice acknowledged what San Antonians have known for years, that the Majestic numbers among Texas' most ornate and entertaining buildings.

Visitors often compare the theater to a Disneyland fantasy set or a Viennese opera house. Designed by John Eberson, a famous and prolific theater architect of the 1920s, the Majestic bears the signature of Eberson's "atmospheric" show palaces: an immense domed skyscape replete with floating clouds, twinkling constellations, and changing light patterns. The auditorium also features a naturalistic blend of stuffed birds, foliage, and a three-dimensional village scene forming the side walls.

The Greater Majestic Theatre opened on Flag Day, June 14, 1929, as the highlight event of "Prosperity Month." City officials and building contractors proclaimed it the most modern and elaborate building in South Texas. "Matchless in Beauty and Comfort – Is a Beacon of Progress and Symbol of All That is Worthy and Fine," exclaimed one newspaper headline. "A building of rare beauty. . . offset by luxurious details in the interior, carrying out the colorful motif of 'Castles in Spain,'" wrote a reviewer.

San Antonians had eagerly watched as builders constructed the theater and

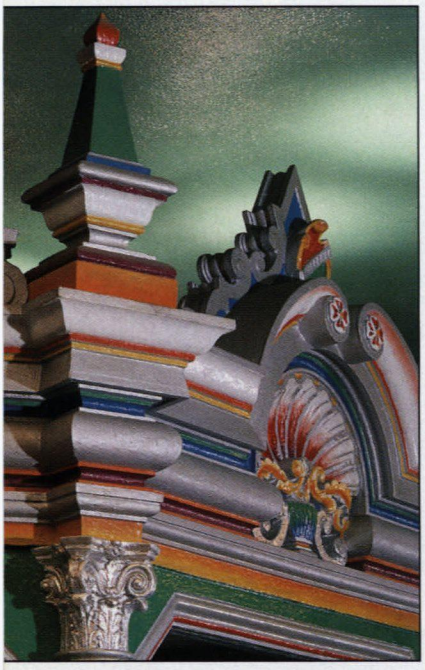
Austin free-lance writer Barbara Lau grew up in San Antonio and enjoyed seeing movies at the Majestic Theatre. She recently coauthored You Don't Have to Go Home from Work Exhausted *with Dr. Ann McGee-Cooper.*

Commercial photographer John Dyer was born in Montana and has lived in San Antonio for 22 years. He specializes in environmental portraits and architectural photography, concentrating on Texas subjects.

By Barbara Lau
Photographs by John Dyer

San Antonio's Majestic Theatre lives up to its name. Designed by John Eberson, the show palace opened in June 1929 to rave reviews for its "atmospheric" decor, most notably a domed skyscape complete with constellations above three-dimensional village scenes along the auditorium walls.

J. Griffis Smith



Every inch of the decorative fixtures was cleaned and refinished when Las Casas, a local nonprofit organization, undertook to restore the cultural landmark. It reopened in September 1989 to host performances by Broadway troupes, renowned entertainers, and the San Antonio Symphony.

an adjoining 17-story office complex and penthouse in a mere 13 months. With 3,700 seats, the Majestic claimed the second largest theater seating capacity in the nation. Central air conditioning was another much-touted feature. Snow-crowned letters in advertisements promised "an acre of cool, comfortable seats," prompting many women to wear fur coats to the opening performance.

A banquet, attended by 600 enthusiastic San Antonians plus a delegation from other Texas cities and Mexico, preceded the premiere. Jimmie Rodgers, "Banjo Boy" Don Galvan, vaudeville acts, and the movie *Follies of 1929* entertained a sellout crowd.

Little did San Antonians know that just four months after their prosperity celebration, the Great Depression would come crashing like a tidal wave over their heads. During the Depression and World War II, Jack Benny, Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland, George Burns, and other entertainers provided a needed source of hope and escapism. When a live performance wasn't in town, movies ran almost continuously.

For thousands like Barbara Garrett, winner of a "Majestic Memories" contest, trips to the Majestic during World War II eased a "stark routine of waiting" for brothers, husbands, and fathers to return home from the front. "Whatever the performance on stage, the Majestic was, for my family in the early Forties, a palace of beauty and grandeur in which we could forget. . .the war and the worries. . .beneath the Majestic's enduring peace," Garrett recalled.

Stepping into the Majestic occasions a delicious assault to the senses. Thanks to Las Casas, a nonprofit foundation for preserving and restoring buildings for cultural use, modern visitors see an almost identical replica of the original. Art historian Jane Preddy describes the Majestic as having "the greatest number of eclectic architectural facades" assembled under one roof for the Twenties. Indeed, an occasional glimpse of cacti, mission bells, and a Lone Star provide the only hints that you are still in Texas.

An original bronze nude clutching a cluster of grapes greets you at the entrance. Award-winning artist Harriet Frishmuth sculpted the graceful nude, nicknamed "Sweet Grapes" by early patrons. Soon to be completed is the reproduction of an elaborate, iridescent mosaic kiosk that once surrounded the statue. The entryway also contains the first of many tapestries draped throughout the building. All are early 20th Century reproductions of famous European tapestries.

At the end of the entry hall stands a huge, built-in aquarium. Removed in the mid-1900s to make room for extra concession space, it is back by popular demand, stocked and maintained daily by Sea World.

Thick double doors open into a dimly lit lobby reminiscent of a medieval castle or a private library at a nobleman's estate. A coffered ceiling connecting to the second-floor lobby promenade features a carved honeycomb motif. Red and green stains accentuate heavy cross-beams, beaded moldings, and other decorative designs.

But don't be fooled. All that "wood" is really painted plaster. In fact, about 90 percent of materials appearing to be wood, tile, and iron are really plaster.

"Eberson was a master of the use of plaster for theatrical design elements," says Las Casas program director Mary Margaret McAllen. "It was cheaper and easier to cast replicas of mission bells, wooden beams, iron railings, and so forth than to obtain the real things," she explains.

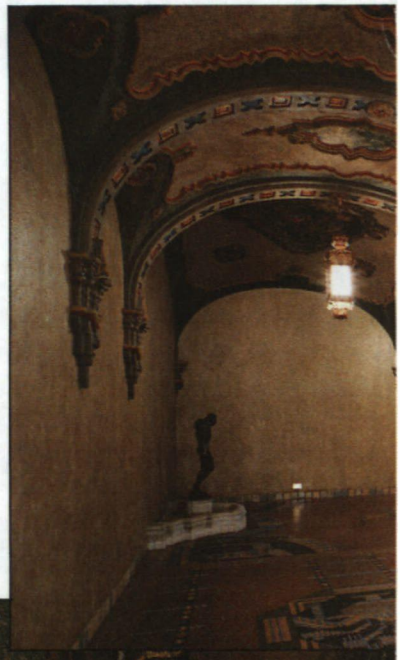
Originally, the Majestic auditorium accommodated 3,700 patrons, but recent renovations removed more than 1,000 seats to allow for more comfortable chairs. Other improvements include concession areas, acoustics enhancement, and a new air-conditioning system—although the Majestic, boasting refrigerated air in 1929, was one of South Texas' first air-conditioned buildings.

"It's a plaster wonderland," adds architect Milton Babbitt, who supervised the recent restoration efforts. When the theater was built, the floor of the theater served as a huge plaster studio, with all of the original ornaments cast on the spot. "It's virtually impossible to tell the difference between the real and the faux," he says.

The lobby opens into a more expansive and brighter rotunda created by an elliptical opening cut through the floor of the second lobby. A huge iron chandelier with gold-leaf ornamentation hangs in the center. A wide stairway leads to the mezzanine lobby. Along the stairway hang several tapestries, and a handsome Talavera urn sits in its own niche.

A hand-operated elevator and an ornate carpet are two other noteworthy features in the lobby. The elevator boasts an elegant art nouveau design and displays the theater's "M" insignia that also appears on the stage curtain. At each performance, trained volunteers wearing bow ties and formal white gloves glide the elevator up and down the three floors.

The striking, deep red carpet is a costly and intricate replica of the original, based on a remnant discovered



J. Griffis Smith

When...Where...How

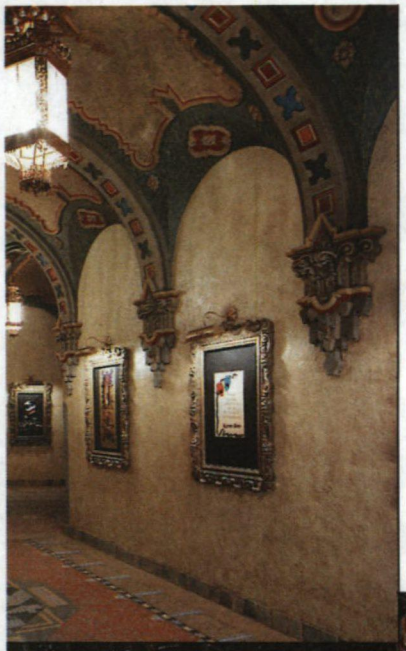
©Kelleygraphics

The Majestic Theatre stands at 230 East Houston Street in downtown San Antonio. Take I-35/I-37 toward downtown. Exit at Houston Street (exit 141C) and drive west on East Houston Street, which leads into Third Street, and then East Martin Street. Follow East Martin to North St. Mary's Street; turn left (south), and go three blocks. Take a left (east) on East Houston Street. The theater will be on your right, in the middle of the block. To drive directly to the parking garage behind the theater, continue on North St. Mary's one more block, and turn left (east) on College Street. The Mid-City Garage (512/224-1000) will be on your left. Other parking garages and several hotels surround the theater. The theater is accessible to the mobility-impaired and offers facilities for hearing-impaired patrons.

Upcoming San Antonio Symphony performances include: November 8-10, David Mairs conducting, with Vladimir Viardo as solo pianist; November 16-17, Chet Atkins in a Pops Symphony performance; December 21-22, Christmas Serenade; February 8-9, Ray Charles in a Pops Symphony performance. Symphony tickets cost $9-$40; Pops Symphony tickets cost $14-$45. Upcoming shows include: January 29-February 3, *The Fantasticks*, starring Robert Goulet; March 12-17, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, starring Rob Lowe. Call 512/226-3333 for information on tickets ($20-$40).

Group tours (for 10 or more participants) during business hours may be arranged by calling the Las Casas office at 512/223-4343. Donations are requested to help complete the restoration efforts.

You can obtain information about San Antonio events, attractions, lodgings, and restaurants from the San Antonio Convention and Visitors Bureau. Write to Box 2277, San Antonio 78298, or call 1-800/447-3372.



during the restoration. The baroque-inspired pattern displays a cabbage rose on an embroidery background.

None of these features prepares you for the glittering panorama awaiting you in the auditorium. Two unmatching facades of a quaint European village stretch from the stage to the back of the balcony and from the floor to the ceiling. The left side presents a predominantly baroque look, while the right side depicts a Moorish/Arabian style. Balconies, opera boxes, stairways, windows, columns, and beaded gratings and railing jut from the multi-terraced facade.

A bronze statue (top) nicknamed "Sweet Grapes" by the Majestic's first patrons stands in the theater's entryway. Lupe and Isabel Revillas take in the ornate fixtures of the rotunda beneath the mezzanine lobby, where an iron chandelier with gold-leaf trim hangs from the honeycomb ceiling.

Almost every inch of the wall and decorative fixtures is ornately carved and highlighted in shades of blue, red, gold, and green. Urns, flowers, coats of arms, and emblems further adorn the weathered, stonelike walls. Garlands and ivy hang from the balconies and stairways. Statues, birdbaths, and stuffed birds stand atop pillars, turrets, belfries, towers, arches, and crosses that compose the village skyline.

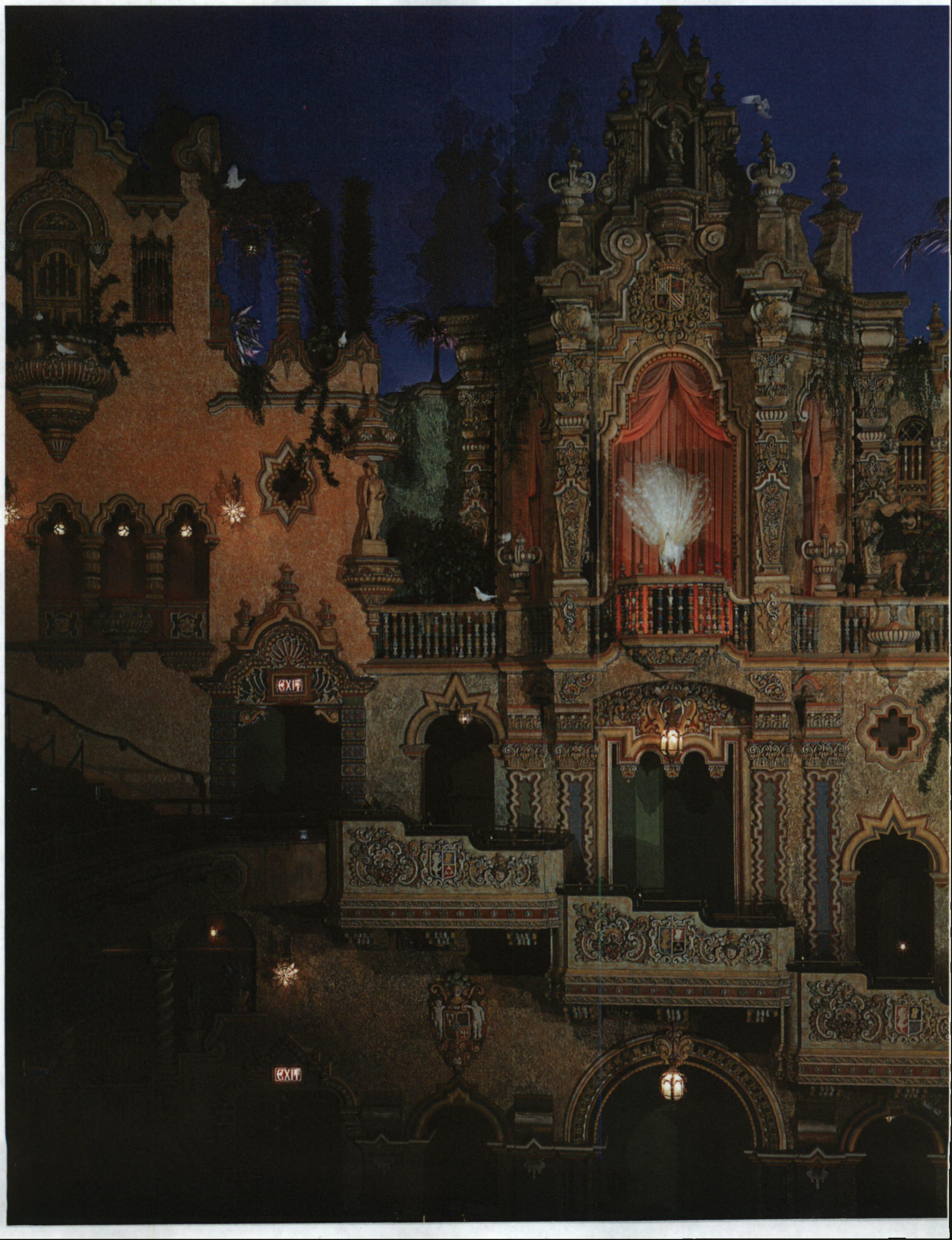
An elegant white peacock with a 10-foot tail-fan perches on the middle balcony of the left wall. The many statues adorning the walls, including the Venus at the peak of the arch and two of St. Michael on the side walls, reflect Greek, Roman, and Renaissance traditions.

An extensive proscenium arch spans the length of the stage and reaches nearly to the top of the 70-foot-high ceiling. The arch features a classical shell design and supports 10 plump, winged angels that hover over the stage along with a large seal of San Antonio. A statue of Venus stands inside an elaborate shrine with a bright red backdrop – the crowning glory to the arch. Two large golden urns sit on either side of her. Numerous palms and Italian cypresses decorate the arch as well.

The flickering domed sky provides yet another beautiful feature. Eberson proved himself a master of detail, and his constellations depict the star patterns appearing on opening night in 1929.

A Brenograph machine – initially used only for Broadway special effects until Eberson began using it for his theaters – projects moving clouds and changing hues onto the ceiling. In the early years, the Majestic's sky progressed from sunrise to sunset, midnight to dawn, during the length of a performance. For current performances, only a nighttime scene appears.

The Majestic retained its popularity until the Fifties, when audiences began attending movie theaters in the suburbs and owners could not keep up with high maintenance costs. Years of dust,


EXIT
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Trees and ivy, urns and birdbaths, and towers and turrets that line the auditorium walls (left) prove architect John Eberson a master of color and detail. Almost all the theatrical design elements, including the wood-like pillars and ceiling of the balcony overlooking the lobby, are crafted from plaster.

soot, and fading paint tarnished its looks. The theater closed in 1974 and did not reopen until 1981, despite the fact that it gained a listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. The 1981 opening represented a $1.5 million renovation to install modern theatrical lighting, sound, and rigging systems, to refurbish one wall, and to extend the stage. For several years, the theater offered Broadway shows. In 1988, the city of San Antonio purchased the theater and leased it for $1 a year to Las Casas with the agreement that the organization raise the funds necessary for its complete restoration.

In a mere 11 months, Jocelyn Straus, founding chairwoman of Las Casas, raised the original $2.5 million to match the city's $2 million contribution for the comprehensive renovation. "There was so much at stake psychologically," explains Straus, "because we accomplished this during a period of economic recession and because we were connecting our past with our present and future. For several generations of San Antonians, the Majestic has been more than a building. It's been a magical place, a palace of dreams." She adds, "Now, when a visiting performer like Carol Channing or Henri Mancini stops a performance to say, 'This is a fantastic place,' the audience stands in unison and applauds."

During restoration, "workers vacuumed and refinished every inch of plaster, including the domed ceiling," says Mary Margaret McAllen. Among the restoration crew were members of the Battersby family, the son, grandson, and great-grandson of one of the original plasterers, who did most of the plaster touch-ups.

All of the foliage was replaced by silk and plastic duplicates of the originals. Eberson had used real plants and trees sprayed with a substance intended to preserve them, but, 60 years later, most were decaying and moldy.

Many seats were removed during the renovation to allow for larger chairs and extra leg room. The theater now accommodates 2,630. Las Casas has initiated a fund drive to restore the second balcony for extra seating. The rest rooms and concession bar signal another bow to creature comforts. New air conditioning and an acoustics enhancement system have been added, too.

The Majestic reopened in September 1989 with as much fanfare as her majesty deserved. The premiere featured Johnny Mathis and Rosemary Clooney, who played to a full house.

The San Antonio Symphony now makes its home at the Majestic, where it appears about six times each month. In addition, the Majestic presents about eight Broadway plays each year, along with numerous musical performances.

The best way to see the Majestic is during a performance, when you have plenty of time to savor the remarkable interior as well as enjoy the excellent acoustics and guest performers. Upcoming acts include Chet Atkins with a Pops Symphony concert, a "Christmas Serenade," and two plays, *The Fantasticks* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.* You can arrange a group tour of the Majestic during the day by calling the Las Casas office.

Thanks to Las Casas and the support of hundreds of San Antonians, the "theater under the stars" and the people of Texas can look forward to another 60 years of enchanted evenings.

By Jack Lowry

Land of the Lost Maples

On the Edwards Plateau where thousands of cedar-topped Hill Country promontories arch skyward, the first rays of autumn sunlight illuminate a brilliant display of orange, crimson, and yellow. Along streams that pour from the canyons north of Vanderpool, bigtooth maples shimmer in the sun. Springs give birth to the Sabinal River, and a national treasure lies cradled in the limestone hills.

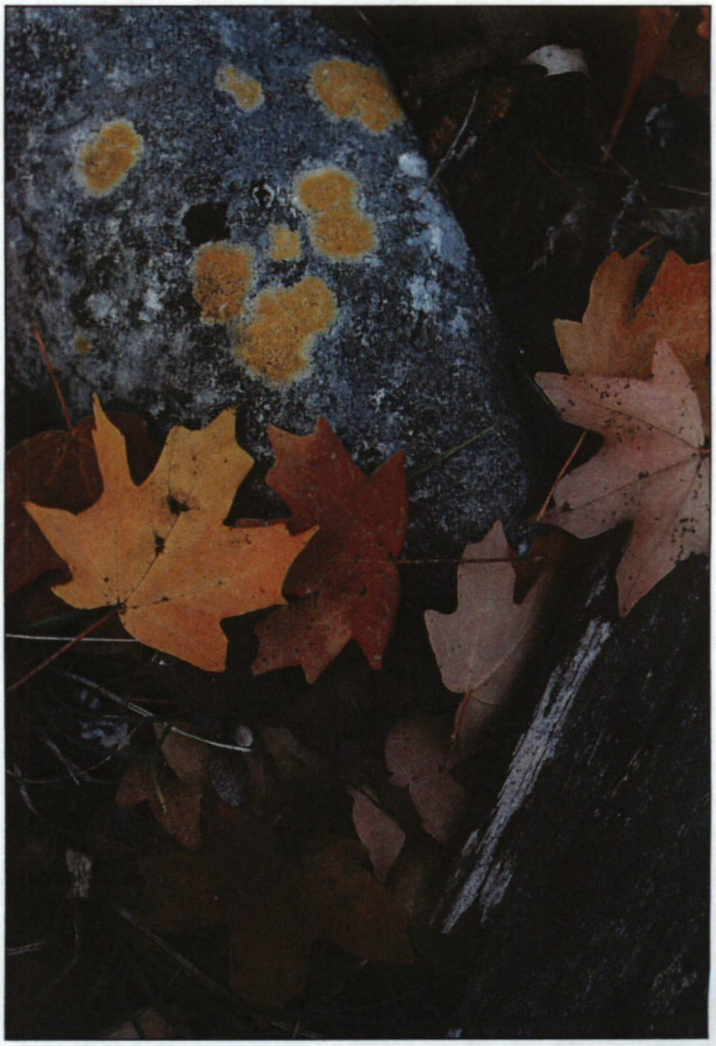
Lost Maples State Natural Area, created by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 1973-74, protects a pocket of primeval Texas for generations to come. In this rugged region, underground water emerges as life-sustaining creeks that cut into the lofty green hills. Gnarled cedars, Lacey oaks, Texas mountain laurels, and prickly pears dot the hills and canyon walls. Along the stream beds grow sycamores, pecans, oaks, and hackberries.

The relict maples that give the natural area its name flourish in the canyon bottoms, where moisture and relatively mild temperatures nurture the trees. Bigtooth maples grow from Idaho to Trans-Pecos Texas and Mexico. Scientists speculate that ages ago, the trees spread eastward from their ranges along the Rocky Mountains. After the last great ice age some 10,000 years ago, the climate became hotter and drier, and the easternmost trees died out except for isolated pockets in the Sabinal River valley and its tributary canyons, at Fort Hood in Coryell County in Central Texas, and in the Wichita Mountains of southwestern Oklahoma.

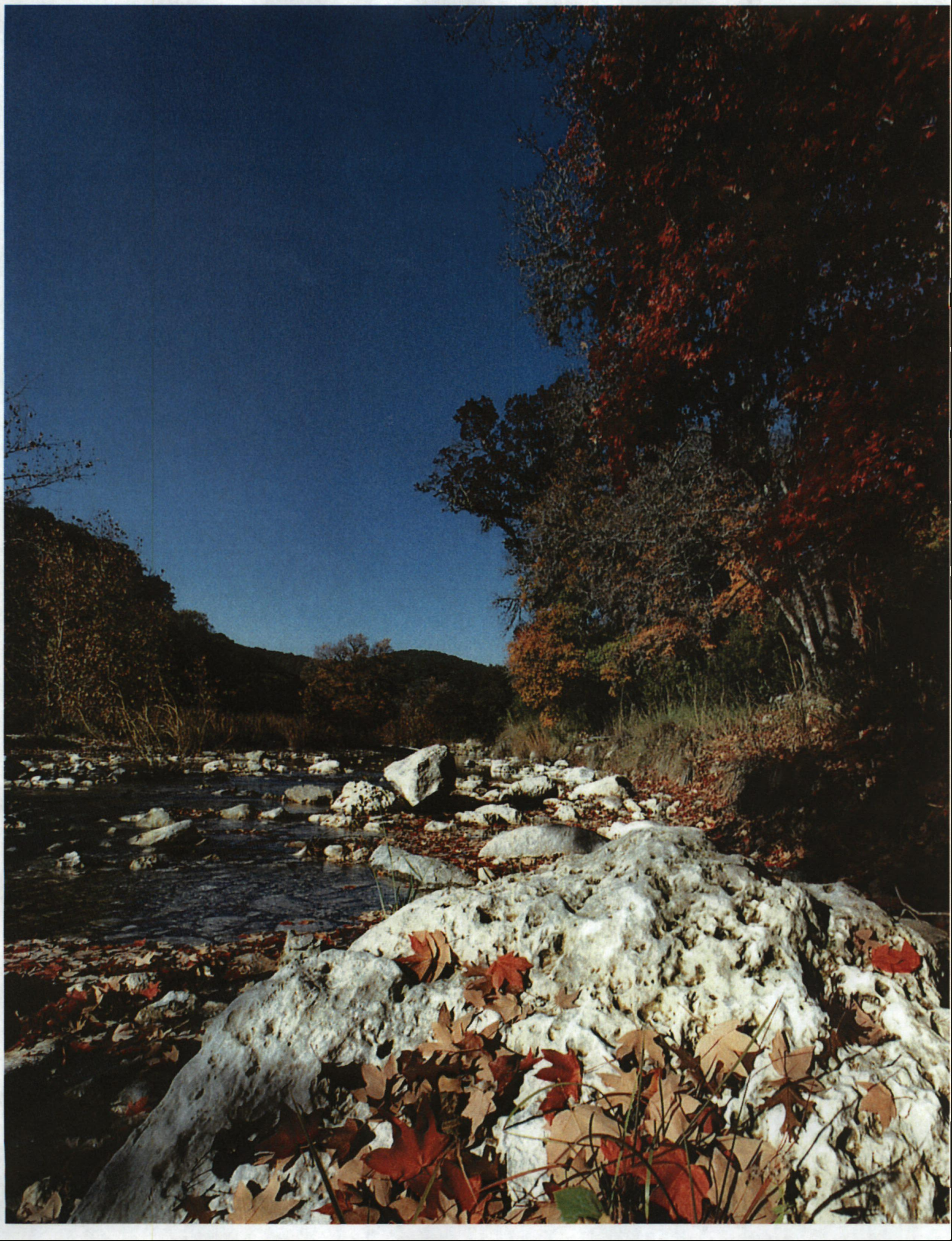
In West Texas, bigtooth maples thrive in sheltered canyons of the Chinati, Chisos, Davis, Del Norte, Glass, Guadalupe, and Sierra Vieja mountains. Lost Maples State Natural Area and McKittrick Canyon in the Guadalupes contain perhaps the most visited and photographed bigtooth maples in Texas.

At one time, botanists thought the Edwards Plateau

Bill Reaves



In October and November, bigtooth maples turn shades of red and gold along the moist canyons of Lost Maples State Natural Area near Vanderpool. On the following spread, the multicolored trees and fallen leaves create idyllic scenes near the natural area's trails. ©Laurence Parent



Bill Reaves

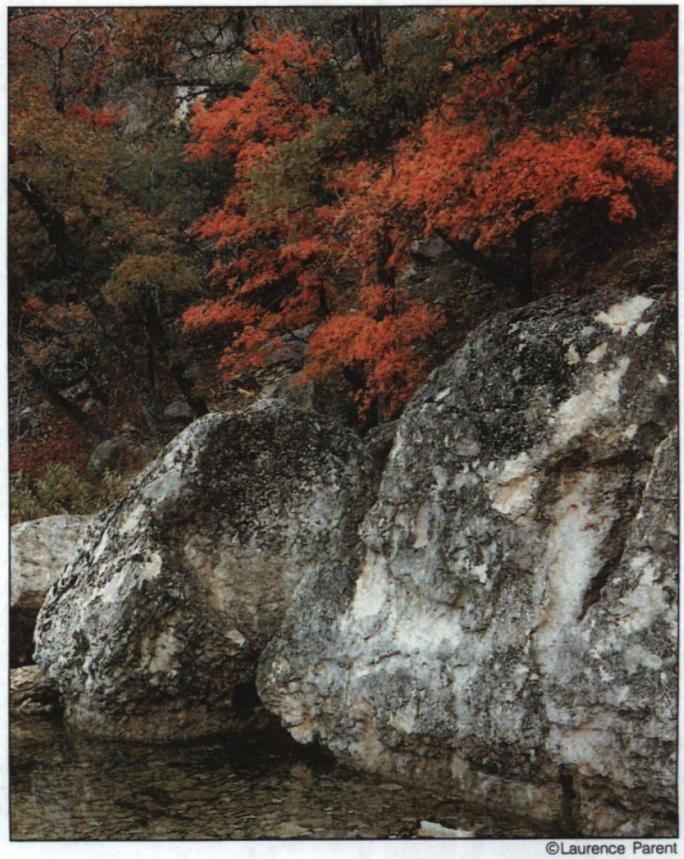
Bright afternoon sunlight filters through maple leaves on a cool autumn day.

Lost Maples natural area (right) claims one of the easternmost and southernmost pockets of bigtooth maples found in the United States.

Above boulders that line the Sabinal River bed, maples create a blazing contrast to green oak leaves that have yet to change color.

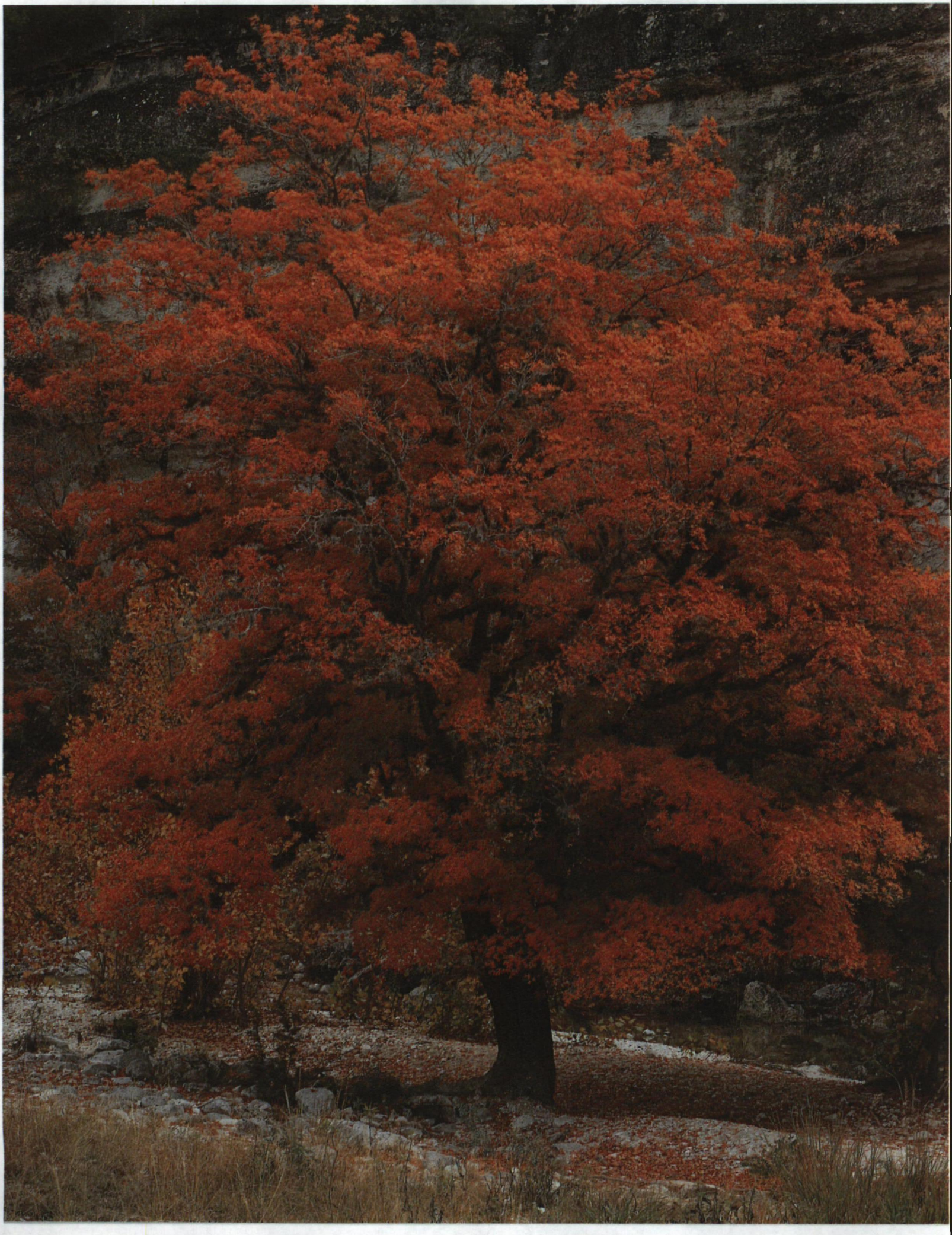
maples were related to the sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*) of the Eastern United States and Canada. The sugar content of the trees' sap gives them their Latin species name, *saccharum*. The Lost Maples were colloquially known as Uvalde sugar maples or Western sugar maples. But in the 1940s, researchers decided that the Edwards Plateau species more closely resembled the bigtooth maples (*Acer grandidentatum*) of the West. Now the trees are called Uvalde bigtooth maples, Sabinal maples, and canyon maples.

Lost Maples State Natural Area protects a rare combination of plant and animal species in a striking Hill Country environment. To keep human impact at a minimum, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has developed less than five percent of the park's 2,208 acres. Of course, this can create problems. If you plan to visit during October and November, park employee Patsy Greaves suggests that you come on a weekday. The park can accommodate only 250 vehicles at a time. The day-use area includes 20 picnic sites, parking spaces, and a rest room. A camping area with electricity, water, shade shelters, and a rest room with showers features 30 campsites. Hikers can use one of eight



©Laurence Parent

Managing editor Jack Lowry recommends a visit to Lost Maples State Natural Area any time of year.



Botanists once thought the Sabinal River maples were forms of the sugar maples of the eastern United States. In the 1940s, they decided that the trees more closely resembled the bigtooth maples of the West.

©Laurence Parent

Maple Trail leads visitors past showy maples, oaks, pecans, sycamores, and other deciduous trees along the Sabinal River bed.

Bill Reaves

When...Where...How

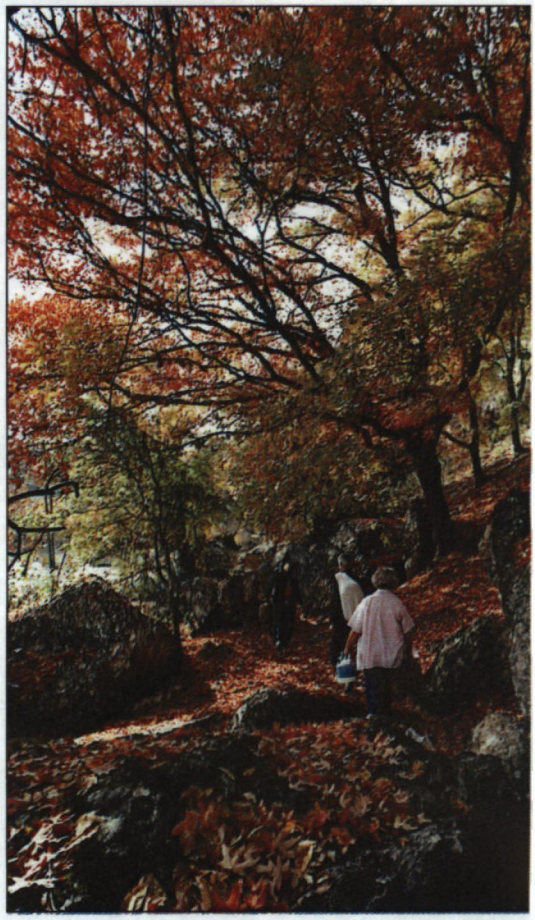
Lost Maples State Natural Area is in northwestern Bandera County five miles north of Vanderpool on Ranch Road 187. The foliage usually changes in late October and early November. The right combination of moisture, cool temperatures, and sunny days in October will determine the brilliance of the autumn foliage. To find out about each year's autumn display, call 1-800/792-1112 after October 1. (Reservations cannot be made with this number.)

The park is popular in the fall and may be crowded on weekends. Limited parking is available. For maximum enjoyment, schedule your trip during the week. The park offers 30 campsites with water, electricity, fire pit and grill, as well as primitive camping. Do not collect wood. Bring firewood or charcoal from home. Ground fires are prohibited in primitive camping areas. For reservations and additional information, write to Superintendent, Lost Maples State Natural Area, HC01, Box 156, Vanderpool 78885, or call 512/966-3413.

Hiking is the park's primary activity. To protect Lost Maples, walk only on designated trails. Soil compaction can harm the roots of trees. Use caution. Some trails are quite steep. Bicycles and vehicles are not allowed on the trails. Plants and animals in the park are protected. Please do not gather leaves, rocks, fossils, or artifacts. Do not litter. Camp only in designated areas. Flash floods are common in the park's canyons. In case of heavy rain, move to higher ground and do not try to cross swollen streams.

Camp supplies and gasoline are available three miles south of the park at the Lost Maples General Store at the intersection of RR 187 and RR 337, and in Utopia, 15 miles south of the park. Cabins on the Sabinal River a mile south of Lost Maples can be rented from Foxfire Cabins; write to HC01, Box 142, Vanderpool 78885, or call 512/966-2200.

Bill Reaves



Hiking is the most popular activity at the park. You'll want to stay on designated trails, since walking off the trails can harm tree roots and cause rockslides.

primitive camping areas that lie one-and-one-half or more miles from the trailheads.

The most accessible and popular trail follows the Sabinal River through some of the park's prime maple-viewing areas. Maple Trail, a fairly level four-tenths-mile walk from the main parking area, introduces you to the vegetation and geography of Sabinal Canyon. Under optimal conditions, the short trail glows with color.

Throughout your walk, the Sabinal ripples and gurgles over smooth river rocks. You feel grateful for the soothing river and its subtle sounds. If it weren't for the life-giving Sabinal, there would be no canyons and no maples. In addition to the maples, look for other deciduous trees – hackberries, oaks, pecans, sycamores, walnuts, and evergreen shrubs like agaritas and Texas mountain laurels.

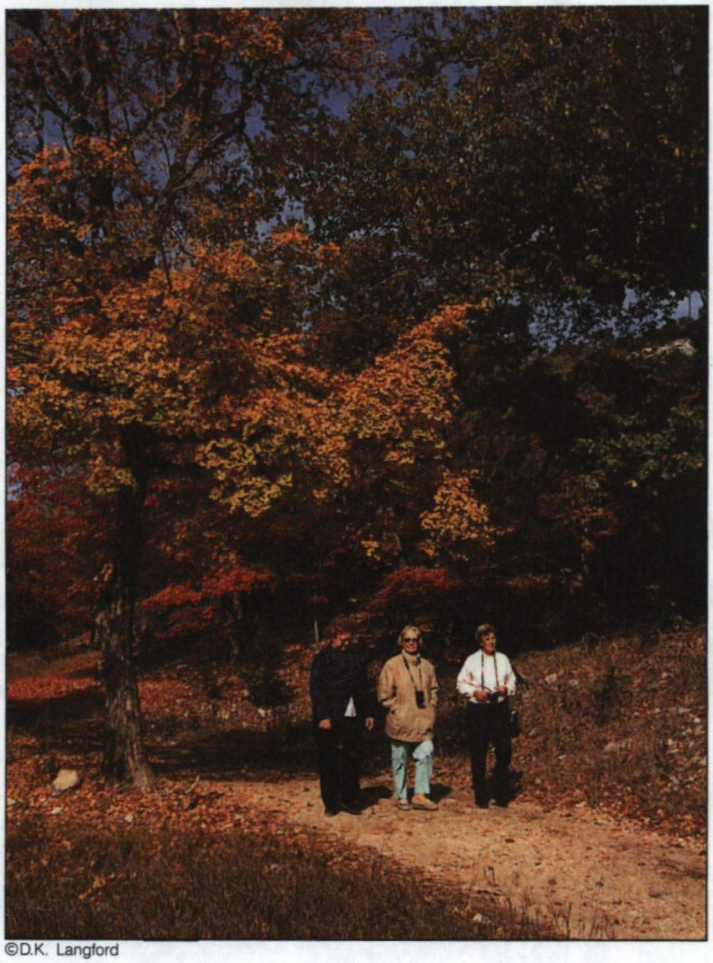
Maple Trail boasts three state and national champion trees that stand within a few hundred yards of each other. Pick up a descriptive flyer about the trees at park headquarters. Look first for the wooden marker that tells you where to find the 65-foot-tall escarpment choke cherry (also called escarpment black cherry), whose leaves glow golden yellow in fall. The Texas native grows along stream beds and canyon slopes with maples, walnuts, and oaks. In late summer, it produces a dark fruit that feeds raccoons, possums, squirrels, and birds.

The next marker alerts you to a towering Texas ash. In the fall, its leaves may range from yellow to purple, which adds to the spectacular display among the scarlet and orange maples. White ash, a close relative of Texas ash, is used to make furniture, cabinets, and baseball bats. Although Texas ash has little commercial value, area settlers have long valued the wood for flooring and fuel.

Finally, you come to the champion bigtooth maple, the pride of Lost Maples State Natural Area. If your visit occurs when moisture, temperature, and light conditions are optimal, you'll be treated to a dazzling show of brilliant foliage. Farther upstream on Hale Hollow Creek, and toward the park's west side along Can Creek and Dry Can Creek, you'll find other rewarding displays of maples.

Although Maple Trail boasts the most accessible hiking area, some visitors prefer viewing the harder-to-reach stands of maples along Can Creek and Dry Can Creek (below and right).

Bill Reaves



©D.K. Langford

Wherever you venture in Lost Maples natural area, you'll see images of wild Texas, a land unspoiled by man's imprint. More than 10 miles of trails meander through scenery where plants and animals abound. On your walk along Can Creek, you may glimpse the raised tail of a white-tailed deer, before he bolts up the canyon to escape your approaching footsteps.

As you follow the trail, look for cedar waxwings, loggerhead shrikes, robins, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, goldfinches, and meadowlarks. At the ponds formed by Can Creek, American widgeons and wood ducks make their winter home. Peer skyward and you may see a lone red-tailed hawk circling above the canyon or a golden eagle soaring overhead.

Along the footpaths, crisp leaves form carpets of red and yellow among chunks of limestone and across snaking, exposed tree roots. Where seep springs emanate from the limestone, the rich greens of maidenhair ferns form a stark contrast with the dappled patterns of fallen brown and yellow leaves. Still pools reflect the flaming maples in glassy water.

Then, almost overnight, shorter days and cool weather cause the brilliant colors to fade. It seems quicker than the subtle transformation that emblazoned the trees with a crescendo of scarlet and gold over the past few weeks. Soon, stately trees with naked branches reaching skyward will brave the winter clad only in bark. In the waning autumn light, a soft gust brings on the first hint of winter's chill.

By Eva Jolene Boyd

During the Republic Era

Texas Mail Had No Class

In the "good old days" of the Texas republic, not much good could be said of the young nation's mail service.

In October 1837, a writer for the *Matagorda Bulletin* echoed the feelings of the period: "here is one of the principal ports of entry of the country. . .without any communication except in one direction. . .and that [is] as uncertain as the wind."

Adolphus Sterne, postmaster at Nacogdoches (see story, page 38), wrote in May 1842, "The western mail arrived, but brought nothing new – nor old either – a thing realy to be deplored, we are now Six weeks without a mail from Galvezton & Houston." (Sterne's words are reproduced here exactly as they appear in his diary.)

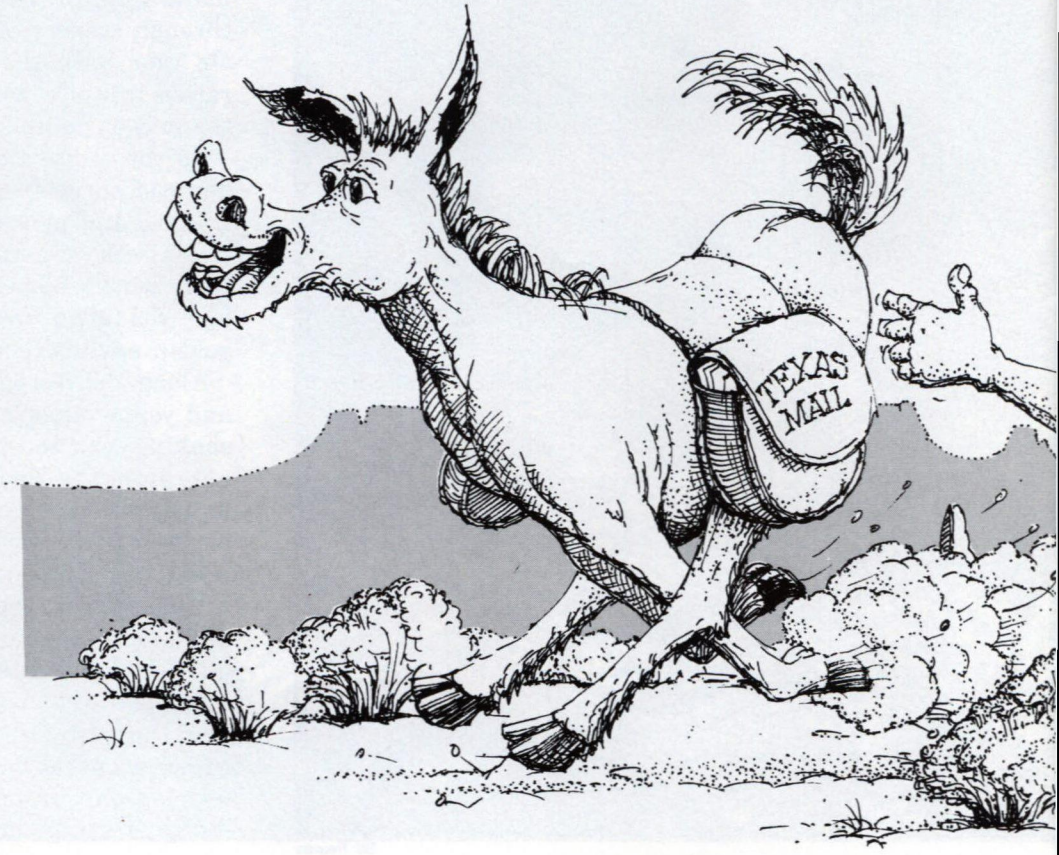
The republic's postal system suffered from wretched roads and a lack of funds that in turn led to unscrupulous contractors, indifferent mail carriers, and circumstances that seem ludicrous now. No one laughed then, though.

The postal service began with the best intentions when the Texas Provisional Government created a permanent post office department in December 1835 and appointed John Rice Jones the first postmaster general. A year later, the First Congress of the Republic passed the Post Office Bill, which President Sam Houston signed on December 20, 1836. Congress appropriated one thousand dollars "for the purpose of facilitating the transportation of the mail." But insufficient funds proved the bane of mail service throughout the republic era.

The post office department depended on postal receipts to pay for most of its expenses, so it charged exorbitant rates. In 1836, Texans paid six and one-fourth cents to send a letter up to 20 miles; 12½ cents for the next 30 miles; and 37½ cents for distances over 200 miles. These rates covered only a single sheet of paper. (Envelopes did not come into use until the mid-1840s, so the sheet was simply folded over and addressed.) Additional pages increased the cost.

In August 1842, Adolphus Sterne wrote in his diary, "Mail arrived from the East – belive it to be the last one for some time to come there being no monay to pay the contractors." Later, he added, "the Eastern mail has stopped, for want of pay – Mrs. Hubert has been a very faithfull Servant of the Public she has carried the mail since last January without any pay whatsoever."

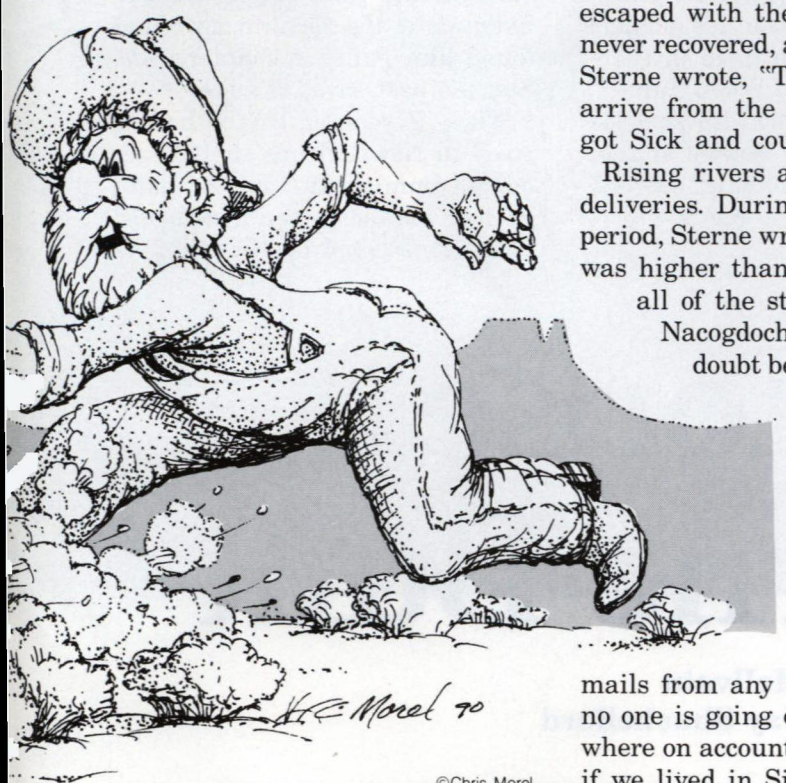
Serving as postmaster in those days wasn't a particularly gratifying



Jolene Boyd of Ingram has written several stories for Texas Highways.

job. Pay was often late, or, as in the case of Noah Smithwick, didn't come at all. The Bastrop postmaster said he never received any compensation except for a few "shinplasters," i.e., paper currency issued by private businesses. Sterne, too, had trouble collecting and often dipped into his own pockets to maintain operations. In August 1843, he pleaded with mail contractor W.B. Goodman to send him some money "to keep the mail going.... I have allready advanced upwards of Sixty dollars... and can not go it any more."

At times, Sterne was disgusted enough to quit. On August 1, 1842, he wrote, "(I) have a serious Idea of resigning my Postmastership. It is a loss to me, every day, and the government is so destitute of means that the Establishment can not be Kept up as it ought to be – it is the beginning of the End." Other times, he seemed indifferent, as in this December 15, 1842, entry: "Route no. 5 will be discontinued on the 1st January next – good – no use no how."



©Chris Morel

Rates for single-page letters sent under 20 miles doubled in 1837. All postal rates doubled in 1841 and increased again in 1842. Few could afford them. Little wonder that the department never took in enough revenue to pay for itself. In many entries in his journal, Sterne indicated empty or near empty mail bags. On May 22, 1842, he wrote, "Red River Mail Boy & his mule arrived, & as usual *empty* mail Bags, send(t) him as he Came – empty."

Poor mail deliveries often resulted from bad roads, foul weather, and indifferent mail carriers. If a mail bag fell in the mud, the carrier might or might not pick it up. Anyway, the mail bags seemed useless in wet weather, as Sterne wrote on December 8, 1842, "the Boy having rode two days in the rain so that the whole Contents were so mangled, and mixed up that it looked more like mush than anything else, so that nothing can be read."

Other mishaps befell carriers and the mail. On the Houston-to-Austin route in 1840, the carrier's mule escaped with the bags, which were never recovered, and in August 1843, Sterne wrote, "The mail did not arrive from the East, the Horse got Sick and could not travel."

Rising rivers also hindered mail deliveries. During a lengthy rainy period, Sterne wrote that the Trinity was higher than usual, as were all of the streams west of Nacogdoches, and "we will no doubt be without news from Galvezton and Houston for two or more weeks." Later, on December 20, 1843, the 42-year-old postmaster bemoaned the lack of mail deliveries: "no mails from any quarter, no news, no one is going or coming from any where on account of the high waters, if we lived in Siberia we could hear some news, here we hear none."

Recurring rains continued to hamper delivery, and by mid-January Sterne reached the end of his rope. "Send(t) off the western mail but the mail rider returned because the water was very high at the Angelina – this is no excuse because other People cross it every day, and there is no danger, in crossing with the mail." The next day, he wrote: "The mail rider returned yesterday Evening from the Angelina saying he could not cross – send(t) the young gentleman back to day with instruction that he must cross, which is practicable at John Dursts Bridge." The hapless carrier returned the next day reporting that the eastbound mail bags had been lost on the "other side of the Trinity."

Not surprisingly, Texans often hired private carriers or allowed friends to deliver their letters. In December 1839, Samuel M. Williams wrote a letter from Austin to his wife in Galveston and told her that he was sending it with a Mr. Welsh. "Since I have been here," he wrote, "the mails have been so irregular that I did not think it worth while to attempt forwarding a letter thro the Postoffice."

Mail service between the republic and the United States was even worse. In 1839, Mary Austin Holley complained that her brother in the states didn't receive half the letters she wrote to him. Nor had things improved by 1844, when James Burke of Brazoria wrote to Secretary of State Anson Jones pleading, "Cannot something be done to facilitate intercourse between Texas and the United States by mail? As matters now stand, it is almost wholly impracticable to get a newspaper from the United States."

By December 1845, when Texas joined the Union, the state claimed about 40 mail routes spread over a couple of thousand miles of post road. Quantity, however, seldom signifies quality – first class, or otherwise.

The House That Sterne Built

By Myra McIlvain
Photographs by Gay Shackelford

painting by Jim Snyder, 1985

Nicholas Adolphus Sterne, a Jewish immigrant from Germany who moved to Nacogdoches in the mid-1820s, worked to free Texas from Mexican rule and later served as the town's postmaster, a state legislator, and a state senator.

After their wedding in 1828, Nicholas Adolphus Sterne and Eva Catherine Rosine Ruff began work on their new home. Their fine white house became one of the grandest in Nacogdoches. The dogtrot center hall, common in most frontier homes, was stylishly closed by wide double doors, and a 52-foot porch stretched across the front.

Over the next quarter century, some of Texas' most colorful movers and shakers crossed the threshold and entered the simply furnished rooms.

David Crockett, passing through Nacogdoches on his way to the Alamo, stayed a week or so with the Sternes. One of the more famous guests, Sam Houston, had been Adolphus Sterne's friend and drinking buddy at the Nashville Inn in Tennessee in the days when Sterne traveled the Southeast as an itinerant peddler.

By the time Houston arrived in Nacogdoches in 1832 and began boarding with the Sternes, Adolphus operated a profitable mercantile business.

Friends gathered in the parlor in 1832 for Sam Houston's baptism into the Roman Catholic faith, a politically expedient move, since Houston had been asked to serve as representative to the conference at Washington-on-the-Brazos, and since Mexican law allowed only members of the established church to hold political office or to own land.

The Sternes' son, Charles, years later related a tale about his mother's beautiful marble-top table in the center of the parlor. When Sam Houston held a meeting with Cherokee Indian Chief Philip Bowles at the Sterne home, the old chief sat on the table, thinking it was a seat of honor for him.

Eva Sterne called her husband out of the room and told him, "Get that Indian off my table," or words to that effect. Sterne replied that Bowles was smoking the pipe of peace. The treaty assured the Cherokees they could retain their land between the Neches and Angelina rivers if they remained neutral in the Texas war for independence from Mexico. The Cherokees kept their word, but after Texas gained its independence the congress of the new republic refused to ratify the agreement.

From the time he arrived in Nacogdoches, Adolphus Sterne was involved in Texas' struggle for independence. Two years before he and Eva married, Sterne barely escaped being shot for treason. He smuggled ammunition hidden in coffee barrels to insurgents who planned the Fredonian Rebellion, an early effort to free the area around Nacogdoches from Mexico. Fortunately, after the Mexican government found him guilty, a chapter from Sterne's past saved his life.

When 16-year-old Sterne had arrived in New Orleans in 1817 as a Jewish immigrant from Germany, he had worked in the mercantile business, studied law at night, and

Southern Accents
April 1990 Vol 13 No. 3

Majestic Extravagance

San Antonio's Revived Atmospheric Theater

Photography by John Dyer
Text by David Dillon

Every major city has one—an old movie palace in the center of town that everybody wants to save but that nobody knows what to do with. San Antonio had the Majestic Theatre, a dazzling "atmospheric" that opened in 1929. But instead of demolishing it, or selling it off piece by piece to antiques dealers, the city decided to restore it as the home of the San Antonio Symphony as

LEFT: *The Majestic's deep blue sky, an atmospheric staple, is sprinkled with hundreds of twinkling lights.*
ABOVE: *The richness of ornamental detail sets the Majestic apart from the bland suburban multiscreen theaters of the eighties.*

well as a center for other performing arts. It is unquestionably the only neo-Spanish-Persian-Moorish concert hall in America, a Hollywood back lot extravaganza recycled for the late twentieth century.

The Majestic was designed by Chicago architect John Eberson, the king of the atmospherics, for the Interstate Amusement Company of Dallas. The company built dozens of atmospherics across the Southwest, all of them offering elaborate three-dimensional embellishments. Excess is the soul of these theaters, and restraint a form of vulgarity. Eberson understood the difference.

"To be a successful theatre architect, one must be a showman," he once explained. "I want to create theatres where pictures can be enjoyed in restful and beautiful surroundings rather than one that would be a mere flaunt of lavishness." Interstate's president, Karl Hoblitzelle, predicted, "The Majestic will be as great an influence for good as the church."

Yet everything in the Majestic is a "flaunt" of one kind or another. In the foyer, Eberson installed a large tropical aquarium framed in colorful ceramic tile; next to it stood an ornate fountain from which a naked nymph, known as Sweet Grapes, coyly emerged, like a folk Botticelli. Both pieces are being restored. The lobby might be a set from *The Cisco Kid*, with dark ornamental plaster beams, coffered ceilings, lanterns, and balconies and staircases that look ideal for romantic assignations.

But the lobby is only a low-key prelude to the main auditorium, which Eberson created as a Mediterranean plaza—Moorish on one side, Spanish on the other. The auditorium ceiling is sky blue, an atmospheric staple, with hundreds of twinkling electric stars and bright cirrus clouds that swirl continuously toward the stage during performances. Attached to the side walls are elaborate, three-dimensional plaster scenes of village life, including towers, balconies, plazas, picturesque tile roofs, and dozens of white doves and preening peacocks.

In 1987, a cadre of influential arts supporters, led by Jocelyn Straus

ABOVE LEFT: *The side walls of the Majestic are replicas of Spanish and Moorish villages.*
ABOVE RIGHT: *As elaborate as any Hollywood set, the Majestic's interiors include many decorative elements, such as birds, tiles, and plants.*
OPPOSITE: *All of the ornamental plaster has been restored by local craftsmen, some of them the sons and grandsons of men who worked on the original theater.*

and realtor Russell Kyse, began to rally round the Majestic. Through a Byzantine sequence of negotiations, the city acquired the Majestic and the adjacent Empire Theatre and then leased both to Las Casas Foundation, a nonprofit group headed by Straus. Las Casas agreed to raise funds for the restorations and to find an operator for both theaters.

In a year, Las Casas raised more than four million dollars for the Majestic restoration and is now focusing on the Empire, a smaller movie house that will be ideal for chamber music and repertory. Together these theaters will form the center of San Antonio's proposed downtown cultural district.

The Majestic restoration is a joint venture of San Antonio architect Milton Babbitt and movie palace renovators Ray Shepardson and Sonya Winner of Detroit. While compromised here and there by money problems, their work is sensitive and thoroughly pragmatic. Much of their four-million-dollar budget went for new lighting and mechanical equipment, including a new cloud machine, a prefabricated acoustic shell for the stage (which is too visually assertive), and a network of carefully concealed speakers that electronically mix and magnify the reflected sound to make it richer and warmer.

The theater is vast—three balconies, twenty-five hundred seats—and also low and wide, so that achieving a rich, full sound is extremely difficult. Yet acoustician Christopher Jaffe insists that with the electronic speaker system the hall sounds as though it were tall and narrow. "Twenty years ago we could have pulled out all the plaster, gutted the place, and probably gotten rave reviews," Jaffe says. "But you can't do that today. Audiences are much more demanding."

The Majestic's acoustics are certainly adequate, and by all accounts far superior to the San Antonio Symphony's former locations. But what most pleases visitors now is the richness of the interior decoration. Over the years, the ornamental plaster had deteriorated to the point that Shepardson often compared the interiors to the last days of Pompeii. No more. All of the ornamental plaster has been painstakingly restored and repainted—columns, ceilings, balcony fronts, and wall reliefs. The original carpets and seat backs have been reproduced, along with many of the light fixtures. And in true San Antonio fashion, much of the work was done by the sons and grandsons of the craftsmen who first worked on the theater. The great-grandson of one of the original plasterers served as the model for recasting the arms and legs of cherubs above the proscenium. His father and grandfather worked side by side on the restoration.

On opening night, the president of the San Antonio Symphony asked everyone to stand who had attended the orchestra's inaugural concert in 1939. Several hundred people rose. Next he asked everyone who had been at the opening of the Majestic to do the same. Several hundred more got up. Everyone clapped for everyone else. Finally he singled out a violist who had been with the orchestra since the beginning and presented her with a bouquet of red roses. There were no references to world-class this or international that. The focus was unapologetically local and personal, a family celebration rather than a notice to the world at large. For San Antonians, the restored Majestic Theatre is simultaneously an architectural treasure, a place for music, and a repository for the community memory. ◇

RIGHT: *Architect John Eberson intended that patrons entering the auditorium would think they had wandered into a Spanish plaza during fiesta.*

EXIT
EXIT
EXIT

The Southern Artist

Fresh Interest in Contemporary Drawings

Text by Samuel Young

Save your contemporary drawings. Or consider, at least, collecting them. The medium is on the rise. Until recently, collectors of contemporary art, and even some curators, have tended to regard drawing as a lesser medium, inferior to painting and sculpture and of scarcely more lasting interest than architectural blueprints. True, a drawing is sometimes preliminary to a finished work in another medium, but that does not mean it cannot arrest the eye, stir the imagination, reveal the inventive soul of its maker. In fact, some argue that works in pencil, charcoal, crayon, and ink liberate an artist's expressive character, resulting in work that is more spontaneous.

The renewed interest in drawings can be traced to several influences over the past decade, but at least subliminally influential was the 1986 exhibition of Picasso's sketchbooks. The art world always knew that Picasso had a sure hand, but the power and intimacy of his most personal work took many by surprise.

Ironically, it was the advent of cubism early in this century, propagated by Picasso and Braque, that created a misperception that drawing was obsolete. If the future of art was abstraction, many reasoned, the old rules of representational imagery must now be invalid. However, some of Picasso's contemporaries in America knew better. "Study . . . men like Picasso and Braque," John Sloan told his classes at the Art Students' League back in the 1920s. "[They] are working for you and me,

LAS CASAS

9/11/92

Caroline -

I sent the application along to you - although, I do not have the map with the UTM code back yet - no person here seems to be able to locate a USGS map overlay. So we will try Austin to see if they can help. Anyway, it will be coming under separate cover - if I have trouble, I'll call you. Also, additional photos will follow.

Thanks -

Sincerely -

Mary Margaret Hecht

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:

SEP 18 1992

H3415(418)

Memorandum

To: Architectural Historian Pitts

From: Senior Historian Levy

Subject: Majestic Theatre, San Antonio, Texas

Most of my editorial markings are for typographical and style preference. This is a generally adequate form except for one point: lack of comparative analysis.

The part 8 text is minimal and relies wholly on a single quote which is a descriptive history. There needs to be documentation for the opening assertion that this theater is among the finest in both the southwest and throughout the nation. The bibliography cites at least three works that should serve that end and ought to be reflected in the text.

Please convey our commentary to the preparers.

Attachment (nomination form and photos)

cc: Bearss
Levy
Henry
418 Majestic Theater, San Antonio, Texas (NHL Pending)

Patty: As I recall, I've reviewed the Majestic previously and my primary concern was the absence of a comparative statement relating to other theaters of its type, especially those that are NHLs. This has been done to my satisfaction, and, thus, this nomination can be formally placed on the agenda.

Ben 10/13/92

cc: Bearss
Levy
Charleton
Pitts
Mendez

PHz 10/28/92

OCT 29 1992

H3415(418)

Ms. Jocelyn L. Straus
President & Founding Chairman
Las Casas Foundation
P.O. Box 15873
San Antonio, Texas 78212

Dear Ms. Straus:

We are pleased to inform you that the National Park Service has completed the study of the property identified on the enclosed sheet for the purpose of nominating it for possible designation as a National Historic Landmark. We enclose a copy of the study report. The National Park System Advisory Board will consider the nomination during its next meeting, at the time and place indicated on the enclosure. The Board will make its recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior based upon the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

You have 60 days to submit your views in writing, if you so desire. After the 60-day period, we will submit the nomination and your comments to the National Park System Advisory Board's History Areas Committee, which will then inform the full Advisory Board of the Committee's recommendations at the Board's meeting. The Secretary of the Interior will then be informed of the Board's recommendations for his final action.

To assist you in considering this matter, we have enclosed a copy of the regulations governing the National Historic Landmarks Program. They describe the criteria for designation (Sec. 65.4), the effects of designation (Sec. 65.2), and specify how you may comment on a proposed designation (Sec. 65.5(d)(4-5)). Should you wish to comment, please send your comments to me, at the National Park Service, History Division (418), P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127.

Sincerely,

s/Ben Levy

for Edwin C. Bearss
Chief Historian

Enclosures

PROPERTY STUDIED FOR
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION

MAJESTIC THEATRE
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

In commenting on the possible designation of the property identified above, you may find guidance in Section 65.5(d)(4) of the enclosed regulations.

The History Areas Committee of the Secretary of the Interior's National Park System Advisory Board will evaluate this property at a meeting to be held on Tuesday, January 12, 1993, at 9:00 a.m. in the Director's Conference Room (#3119) in the Main Interior Building at 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC. The History Areas Committee evaluates the studies of historic properties being nominated for National Historic Landmark designation in order to advise the full National Park System Advisory Board at their meeting on Wednesday, February 3, 1993, at approximately 9:00 a.m., at the Sheraton Key Largo Resort, 97000 South Overseas Highway, Key Largo, Florida, and will recommend to the full Board those properties that the Committee finds meet the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

Should you wish to obtain information about these meetings, or about the National Historic Landmarks Program, please contact Senior Historian Benjamin Levy at the National Park Service, History Division (418), P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; or by telephone at (202) 343-8164.

If you have questions concerning the study, which was prepared by Ms. Mary Margaret McAllen of Las Casas Foundation and edited by Architectural Historian Carolyn Pitts of the National Park Service, you may contact Ms. Pitts at the History Division address given above, or by telephone at (202) 343-8166.

SIMILAR LETTERS SENT TO:

OWN: Ms. Jocelyn L. Straus
President & Founding Chairman
Las Casas Foundation
P.O. Box 15873
San Antonio, Texas 78212

HEO: Honorable Nelson W. Wolff
Mayor of the City of San Antonio
P.O. Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

SHPO: Mr. Curtis Tunnell
Executive Director
Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276, Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

cc: Ms. Mary Margaret McAllen
Projects Director
Las Casas Foundation
P.O. Box 15873
San Antonio, Texas 78212

bcc: 1200 (RMRO) G. Kendrick
7000 (SWRO) N. Mangum
001 RF
400 RF
418 Pitts
418 MAJESTIC THEATRE (NHL Pending)

PHenry:10/02/92
NUEVA MADRE ENRIQUEZ NOTICE LETTERS:WINTER 1992:MAJE-2B.LTR

PH 10/23/92
Blevy (stating 4/13)
10/28/92

H3415(418)

OCT 3 0 1992

Honorable Lloyd Bentsen
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bentsen:

We are pleased to inform you that the National Park Service has completed the study of the property identified on the enclosed sheet for the purpose of nominating it for possible designation as a National Historic Landmark. We enclose a copy of the study report. The National Park System Advisory Board will consider the nomination during its next meeting, at the time and place indicated on the enclosure. The Board will make its recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior based upon the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

You have 60 days to submit your views in writing, if you so desire. After the 60-day period, we will submit the nomination and your comments to the National Park System Advisory Board's History Areas Committee, which will then inform the full Advisory Board of the Committee's recommendations at the Board's meeting. The Secretary of the Interior will then be informed of the Board's recommendations for his final action.

To assist you in considering this matter, we have enclosed a copy of the regulations governing the National Historic Landmarks Program. They describe the criteria for designation (Sec. 65.4), the effects of designation (Sec. 65.2), and specify how you may comment on a proposed designation (Sec. 65.5(d)(4-5)). Should you wish to comment, please send your comments to Mr. Edwin C. Bearss, Chief Historian, National Park Service, History Division (418), P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127.

Sincerely,

/Sgd/Rowland T. Bowers

(for) Jerry L. Rogers
Associate Director,
Cultural Resources

Enclosures

PROPERTY STUDIED FOR
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION

MAJESTIC THEATRE
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

In commenting on the possible designation of the property identified above, you may find guidance in Section 65.5(d)(4) of the enclosed regulations.

The History Areas Committee of the Secretary of the Interior's National Park System Advisory Board will evaluate this property at a meeting to be held on Tuesday, January 12, 1993, at 9:00 a.m. in the Director's Conference Room (#3119) in the Main Interior Building at 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC. The History Areas Committee evaluates the studies of historic properties being nominated for National Historic Landmark designation in order to advise the full National Park System Advisory Board at their meeting on Wednesday, February 3, 1993, at approximately 9:00 a.m., at the Sheraton Key Largo Resort, 97000 South Overseas Highway, Key Largo, Florida, and will recommend to the full Board those properties that the Committee finds meet the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

Should you wish to obtain information about these meetings, or about the National Historic Landmarks Program, please contact Senior Historian Benjamin Levy at the National Park Service, History Division (418), P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; or by telephone at (202) 343-8164.

If you have questions concerning the study, which was prepared by Ms. Mary Margaret McAllen of Las Casas Foundation and edited by Architectural Historian Carolyn Pitts of the National Park Service, you may contact Ms. Pitts at the History Division address given above, or by telephone at (202) 343-8166.

SIMILAR LETTERS SENT TO:

Honorable Lloyd Bentsen
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Phil Gramm
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Henry B. Gonzalez
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

cc: 1200 (RMRO) G. Kendrick
7000 (SWRO) N. Mangum
001 RF
190 CL
400 RF
418 MAJESTIC THEATRE (NHL Pending)

PHenry:10/02/92
NUEVA MADRE ENRIQUEZ NOTICE LETTERS:WINTER 1992:MAJE-2D.LTR

Cons

HENRY B. GONZALEZ
20TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

2413 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4320
202-225-3236

HOME OFFICE:
B-124 FEDERAL BUILDING
727 E. DURANGO STREET
SAN ANTONIO, TX 78206-1286
512-229-6195

HOUSE TASK FORCE ON THE
QUINCENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4320

COMMITTEE:
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SUBCOMMITTEES:
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CHAIRMAN
GENERAL OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND COINAGE
DOMESTIC MONETARY POLICY
POLICY RESEARCH
AND INSURANCE

402

November 18, 1992

FILE REF:
A07
jcs

1008617A

Mr. Jerry L. Rogers
Associate Director
U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

DEC 2 1992

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Thank you for your letter and for the materials you enclosed with regard to the nomination of the Majestic Theater for designation as a National Historic Landmark.

I very much appreciate your sharing this information with me.

With every good wish, I remain

Sincerely,

Henry B. Gonzalez
Member of Congress

LLOYD BENTSEN
TEXAS

100 80 195

400

COMMITTEES:
FINANCE
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
JOINT ECONOMIC
JOINT COMMITTEE ON TAXATION

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4301

December 4, 1992

Director James M. Ridenour
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Ridenour:

I have been advised that the Majestic Theatre in San Antonio has submitted an application to the National Park Service for designation as a National Historic Landmark.

I would like to express my strong interest in this proposal and my hope that it will receive a favorable response, consistent with your established procedures. I would appreciate your advising me of the application's current status as well as your final determination.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Lloyd Bentsen

Lloyd Bentsen

PLEASE REPLY TO:

961 Federal Building
Austin, Texas 78701

SHPO

THE STATE OF TEXAS

CURTIS TUNNELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 12276 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711 (512)463-6100

14 December 1992

Mr. Edwin C. Bearss, Chief Historian
USDI, National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Ed,

This letter will serve as positive endorsement by the Texas State Historic Preservation Office of San Antonio's Majestic Theater for National Historic Landmark designation.

The 1927-29 Majestic Theater is one of the most important historic entertainment facilities in the state. It is likely one of architect John Eberson's most unified and balanced "atmospheric" designs in the nation. In recent years, the theater has been expertly restored and adapted to new uses. Its integral office tower promises to be at the center of housing redevelopment in downtown San Antonio.

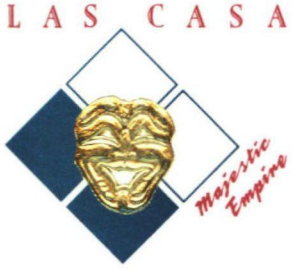
Therefore we strongly support the nomination of the Majestic Theater as a National Historic Landmark. Please let us know if we may provide further information for the designation process.

Sincerely,

Curtis Tunnell
State Historic Preservation Officer

DEC 18 1992

LAS CASAS



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The Hon. William E. Thornton

Elliott Z. Cohen
Advisor

Mary Margaret McAllen
Projects Director

Christina Avena
Administrative Assistant

Betty H. Ludwig
Volunteer Coordinator

10 December 1992

Ms. Carolyn Pitts
Architectural Divison
History Division
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Carolyn:

The following is a one paragraph description of the Majestic Building:

> The Majestic Building houses the Majestic Theatre. The fourteen-story building was designed by John Eberson and is a straightforward 1920's brick highrise design with baroque cast stone ornament. It is under restoration and contains four floors of leased office space. Above the offices, are forty-seven apartments for lease or rent ranging from studios to one and two bedroom units. At the top floor of the building is a two-story penthouse with a rooftop courtyard and spectacular views of the city.

Carolyn, I hope this fits with what you had in mind for the building paragraph.

Please let me know if you need further information or would like me to rewrite this. My number is (210) 223-4343.

Thanks again for all you have done to organize the Majestic's application.

Sincerely,

Mary Margaret McAllen

Mary Margaret McAllen
Projects Director

HEO

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

NELSON WOLFF
MAYOR

December 14, 1992

Edwin C. Bearss, Chief Historian
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, DC 20013-7127

Dear Mr. Bearss:

I understand that the Las Casas Foundation has submitted a proposal to have the Majestic Theatre designated as a National Historic Landmark. The proposal clearly addresses the central criteria employed by the Park Service to substantiate historic significance. I want to lend my wholehearted and enthusiastic endorsement to this request.

I want to reinforce this municipal government's commitment to the Majestic. Recognizing not only the historic importance of the theatre, but also the community's desire to see it renewed as a viable cultural facility, the City of San Antonio stepped forward as a leading partner in the restoration. Today, the Majestic is a fully functional, beautifully restored cultural treasure that is the site of many hours of powerful performances and sheer enjoyment for tens of thousands of our citizens and visitors. The entire project is a national model of community care and action.

Having the Majestic Theatre designated as a National Historic Landmark would constitute the icing on the cake. The City of San Antonio would regard such designation with a combination of great honor and pleasure.

If I can be of further assistance during your review process, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely yours,

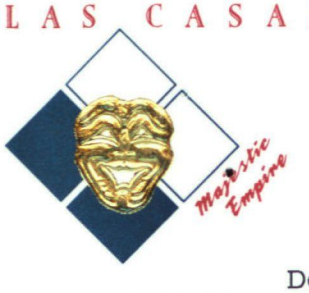
Nelson W Wolff

NELSON W. WOLFF
Mayor

DEC 18 1992

OWN

LAS CASAS



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The Hon. William E. Thornton

Elliott Z. Cohen
Advisor

Mary Margaret McAllen
Projects Director

Christina Avena
Administrative Assistant

Betty H. Ludwig
Volunteer Coordinator

December 15, 1992

Mr. Edwin C. Bearss
Chief Historian
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127.

Dear Mr. Bearss:

The Majestic Theatre in San Antonio has been submitted and is under review for designation as a National Historic Landmark with the National Park Service. The Majestic was built in 1929 and is one of the few remaining atmospheric movie palaces in the United States. It is one of the most remarkable buildings in the nation and it is recognized nationally and internationally.

Las Casas Foundation raised $5.5 million to restore the Majestic to its original splendor. The Majestic is the cornerstone of the San Antonio Cultural Arts District and is an economic catalyst. Since reopening in 1989, over 750,000 people have attended symphony concerts or Broadway shows in this theatre.

Las Casas Foundation is very hopeful that the Majestic will be approved as a National Landmark. This unique theatre has appeared in many major publications and is widely recognized as one of San Antonio's and the nation's greatest treasures. The cultural events presented at the Majestic contribute in a major way to the quality of life for all our South Texas citizens, as well as our thousands of tourists.

Thank you for your consideration of the Majestic Theatre's application. This designation would be important to the entire region as we continue to work diligently to preserve San Antonio's heritage.

Sincerely,

Jocelyn L. Straus

Jocelyn L. Straus
President and Founding Chairman

LAS CASAS ◇ A Foundation for the Preservation and Restoration of Buildings for Cultural Use
P.O. Box 15873, San Antonio, Texas 78212 ◇ (512)223-4343

DEC 18 1992

CONG

HENRY B. GONZALEZ
20TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

2413 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4320
202-225-3236

HOME OFFICE:
B-124 FEDERAL BUILDING
727 E. DURANGO STREET
SAN ANTONIO, TX 78206-1286
512-229-6195

HOUSE TASK FORCE ON THE
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND COINAGE
DOMESTIC MONETARY POLICY
POLICY RESEARCH
AND INSURANCE

December 16, 1992

FILE REF.:
A07
jcs

Mr. Edwin C. Bearss
Chief Historian
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Mr. Bearss:

I am writing in strong support of the application of the Las Casas Foundation for the Majestic Theater in San Antonio to be designated as a National Historic Landmark.

The Majestic Theater is a building that is significant to the nation not only because of its architecture but because of the role it has played, and continues to play, in the cultural development of San Antonio. It was originally designed as a movie/vaudeville house and was the first publicly-accessible building in San Antonio to be air-conditioned - something that is quite significant and can only be appreciated by those who have endured the heat and humidity that San Antonio experiences in the summer months!

The Majestic Theater is known throughout the southwest because it is one of the most remarkable atmospheric/fantasy palaces in the United States. The building has been restored to reflect its original furnishings and decor, and upon reopening in 1989 after its major restoration was completed the Theater has played host to events attended by the First Lady, by international leaders, and by numerous others who have wanted to enjoy first-class entertainment in the most beautiful of surroundings. The Theater is the home of the San Antonio Symphony and is the cornerstone of the San Antonio Cultural Arts District. Further, it is a strong anchor for downtown San Antonio, attracting tourists as well as local community members to the downtown district for shopping and entertainment. This has helped San Antonio retain its position as one of the few major cities in the U.S. having a thriving downtown and inner city business district.

I wholeheartedly endorse the application of Las Casas, and hope that every possible favorable consideration will be given to the proposal to designate the Majestic Theater as a National Historic Landmark.

Sincerely,

Henry B. Gonzalez
Member of Congress

CP 12/16/92
Blevy 12/16/92

Konrad 12/15

RVBowers 12/18/92

H34(418)

DEC 22 1992

Honorable Lloyd Bentsen
United States Senator
961 Federal Building
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Senator Bentsen:

Thank you for your inquiry on behalf of the Majestic Theater in San Antonio. The theater is currently being considered as a potential National Historic Landmark in the field of architecture.

The nomination is scheduled to be considered by the History Areas Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board on January 12, 1993 and the full Board on February 3, 1993. I am pleased to inform you that a recent informal peer review gave the property high marks. We will, of course, have to await the deliberations of the Board and, ultimately, the action of the Secretary of the Interior. While we cannot foretell the action of the review boards, the Majestic Theater is a strong candidate.

Thank you for your expression of interest in the National Historic Landmarks Survey. We trust this response is of service to you.

Sincerely

/Sgd/Jerry L. Rogers

Jerry L. Rogers
Associate Director
Cultural Resources

cc: 001 RF
190 CL
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400 Bowers
418 Majestic Theater NHL Pending
FNP:Blevy:wa:12/16/92
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Control #	:	10080195
Final Due	:	12-21-92
Assigned To	:	CULTURAL RESOURCES — 400
Name	:	BENTSEN 12/4
Park	:	National Park Service
Subject:	:	Historic Preservation
Description	:	RE MAJESTIC THEATRE IN SAN ANTONIO HAS SUBMITTED AN APPLICATION TO THE NPS FOR DESIGNATION AS A NHL
Document Title	:	INCOMING - LLOYD BENTSEN
Signature Level/Action	:	Direct Resp.Assoc. Dir
Draft Due	:	N/A
Date Received	:	12-14-92
NPS Status	:	ASSIGNED
Congressional?	:	Y
Case Worker	:	M. PEARSON 208-6330

For Release: Anita Clevenger 202/208-7394

INTERIOR SECRETARY DESIGNATES 21 NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt today announced the designation of 21 buildings and sites in 14 States as National Historic Landmarks. The States include Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Texas.

"We are pleased to designate these new National Historic Landmarks, which includes archeological sites and districts, buildings representing women's history, art and architecture, and sites representing the westward expansion and engineering," Babbitt said. "These landmarks represent American history from the earliest peoples in prehistoric to historic times."

Administered by the National Park Service, the National Historic Landmarks designation follows careful professional study and evaluation. It is the Federal Government's official recognition of the national importance of historic properties and the efforts of owners toward their preservation.

The Historic Sites Act of 1935 authorized the Secretary of the Interior to recognize historic places judged to have exceptional value to the Nation. Landmark recognition encourages preservation efforts by State, local and private agencies and groups. Once the Secretary designates a National Historic Landmark its owner is invited to apply for landmark recognition. This takes the form of a certificate signed by the Secretary and a bronze plaque attesting to the significance of the property. The owner agrees to observe simple preservation precepts with respect to the property and receives technical advice and assistance from preservation experts if needed.

-NPS-

(The attached list describes the newly designated National Historic Landmarks.)

HISTORIC CONTACT THEME STUDY

NAUSET ARCHEOLOGICAL DISTRICT
CAPE COD NATIONAL SEASHORE, EASTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

The district consists of six discontiguous sites totalling 37.7 acres. Archeologists identified these six as the best of the ten studied for high potential to contain deposits dating to the period of contact with Europeans. Nauset is one of the few properties in the Northeast containing deposits collectively preserving an almost unbroken 6,000 year sequence of human occupation. Nauset provides unparalleled opportunity to assess aspects of Indian culture documented by Champlain and other European visitors during the early years of the 17th century. Of sites in southern New England, Nauset is the only one possessing extensive intact features solely dating to the earliest years of contact.

MINISINK ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE
DELAWARE WATER GAP NATIONAL RECREATION AREA, SUSSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY, & PIKE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Located in and around Minisink Island, the component sites all have been shown to possess intact cultural resources associated with the period of European contact with the Native Americans of the area, the Munsee people. Minisink contains some of the most extensive intact concentrations of 18th-century deposits in the North Atlantic region. It was the most important Munsee Indian community for much of the 17th and 18th centuries and is documented as a major center of an Indian social network stretching from the Connecticut Valley to Ohio country and the best documented Munsee community of its era. Minisink is the single most important Indian community in the upper Delaware River valley during historic contact times.

WARD'S POINT ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE
TOTTENVILLE, NEW YORK

Located near Tottenville at the southwest corner of Staten Island, the site is located on twenty archeologically sensitive acres within Conference House Park owned by New York City. The site is the largest, best preserved, and most intensively studied archeological locale associated with Indian people in the metropolitan New York area. Deposits here are the only source capable of providing further insight into poorly documented aspects of Munsee life and intercultural relations along the Atlantic coast. Such deposits constitute the only presently known record of Indian occupation at Ward's Point when Dutch and English settlers first began colonizing the Island and other areas of Munsee country during the early 1600s. Excavators have recovered here the most extensive and best documented assemblage of artifacts yet found in any archeological locale along Atlantic coastal reaches of Munsee country.

FORT MASSAPEAG ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE
OYSTER BAY, NEW YORK

The site, located within a .25-acre undeveloped city park, contains the most intact and best documented archeological deposits preserving evidence of military and economic property types used in Munsee country during the historic contact period. Resources preserved here comprise an exemplary assemblage of deposits documenting social, political, and economic relations between Indian people and colonists on western Long Island during the middle decades of the 17th century.

INDIVIDUAL ARCHEOLOGICAL STUDIES

BROOKS RIVER ARCHEOLOGICAL DISTRICT
KATMAI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE, BRISTOL BAY BOROUGH, ALASKA

The district is located along the series of ancient beach ridges and river terraces associated with the 2½-mile long Brooks River. The twenty well-preserved sites which make up the district date from 2500 BC to historic times. The district has yielded and is expected to continue to yield data of major scientific importance. The district is the single area of greatest concentration of Arctic Small Tool Tradition people known in Alaska and possibly in North America. It is estimated that over 90% of all the archeological properties remain intact.

AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND
NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

Located in the New Civic Center area of downtown Manhattan, the Burying Ground was partially excavated in connection with the construction of a Federal office building. Much of the cemetery is preserved by the depth of the burials under filled land. The site has yielded and is expected to continue to yield information of major scientific importance. The burial ground held sacred meaning and profound social and cultural importance for the predominantly enslaved population of the 18th century and it provides a unique opportunity to recognize, preserve, and study their history. The site may be the only preserved urban eighteenth-century African burying ground in the Americas.

WOMEN'S HISTORY THEME STUDY

ALICE AUSTEN HOUSE
STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK

Built in stages beginning about 1700, this Gothic Cottage, also known as "Clear Comfort," was the residence of Elizabeth Alice Austen (1866-1952), who lived here for 78 years of her life. Her collection of photographs establish her as the earliest American woman of importance in photography. Her pictures were developed in a darkroom on the second floor and rinsed at the pump in the back yard. Her photographs predate in subject matter and technique the great figures in the field. The house is a rare example of a half-timbered and stucco building of late-Medieval design and English construction technique.

KATE CHOPIN HOUSE
CLOUTIERVILLE, LOUISIANA

A Louisiana raised cottage and now the Bayou Folk Museum, this house was the residence of Katherine O'Flaherty Chopin (1850-1904) during the years 1880-1883. Her position in American literary history has been reestablished in the last two decades. While she did not write while living here, her experience at Cloutierville inspired many of her works. The Bayou folk culture of the Cane River area supplied the setting and character of her most noted stories. The house, built in the early 1800s, retains most of its primary features with only minor changes to its historic appearance.

BIRDCRAFT SANCTUARY
FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT

Consisting of a museum, bungalow, free-standing chimney, and a lake, all on 6½ acres of land, the sanctuary was established in 1916 through the inexhaustible efforts of Mabel Osgood Wright (1859-1934) who sought to preserve and enhance the study of birdlife through the encouragement of ecology and bird habitat. Wright has been credited with assisting in salvaging the Audubon movement from obscurity and laying a foundation for its current success. A committed educator and prolific author, she appealed in her work to children who were a major focus of her attention.

PICOTTE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
WALTHILL, NEBRASKA

Located on the Omaha Indian Reservation, this 1½-story frame building in the craftsman style was constructed in 1912-13 for Dr. Susan LaFlesche Picotte (1865-1915), the first Native American woman to practice medicine in the United States. She was an active and prominent advocate for improved health care for Native Americans, vigorous in her support for temperance, and heroic in her efforts to deliver medical services to her people. With the exception of asbestos siding over original clapboarding, the historical integrity of the building survives.

IDA TARBELL HOUSE
EASTON, CONNECTICUT

This two-story, gable-roofed, wood-frame building was the residence of Ida Tarbell (1857-1944), who lived here from 1906 until her death in 1944. She wrote many of her works in the first floor study of this house. Tarbell was one of the pioneers of modern journalism and literary biography whose prominence was established by her writing *The History of the Standard Oil Company*. This publication earned her the royalties with which she purchased this house. Her expose of the Standard Oil Company in *McLure's* magazine earned her the label "muckraker" from President Theodore Roosevelt.

ENGINEERING

ST. CLAIR RIVER TUNNEL
PORT HURON, MICHIGAN

The St. Clair River Tunnel crosses the international boundary between Port Huron, Michigan, and Sarnia, Ontario. Completed in 1891, it was the first full-size subaqueous tunnel built in North America. This accomplishment was not possible until engineers learned to combine three elements of tunnel construction: the shield method of excavation; the cast iron tunnel lining; and excavation in a compressed air environment. The tunnel is significant in the history of engineering as the world's first true test of the feasibility of constructing railroad (and later vehicular) tunnels through the soft porous ground commonly found beneath rivers. This had a broader impact on the nation's historical development by breaking costly transportation bottlenecks.

WESTWARD EXPANSION

BEGINNING POINT OF THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE SURVEY
JUNCTION OF LEE, PHILLIPS, & MONROE COUNTIES, ARKANSAS

From this initial point, originally marked in 1815 by teams of intrepid surveyors, were surveyed the lands that constituted nearly all of the Louisiana Purchase, including all or part of 13 States—an area of hundreds of thousands of square miles that is the most extensive uninterrupted such system in the world. This extension into the trans-Mississippi West of the rectangular survey system first utilized in Ohio had, among its far-reaching and long-lasting effects, direct influences on rural and urban settlement patterns, road and railroad alignments, and the configuration of State boundaries and local political subdivisions. The Beginning Point is located in a State park that preserves the high swamp setting that is remarkably unchanged since its original survey.

ART & ARCHITECTURE

CANTERBURY SHAKER VILLAGE
CANTERBURY, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Canterbury Shaker Village (established in 1792) possesses an exceptionally high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. It is considered to be among the most intact and authentic of the surviving Shaker villages—the largest, most successful and best known of America's 19th-century communal, utopian societies. The stark harmony of the well-ordered practical structures erected by the Canterbury Shakers illustrates the Shaker principle of simple beauty through function.

COBBLESTONE HISTORIC DISTRICT
CHILDS, NEW YORK

Cobblestone construction is one of the most interesting of American vernacular building types. Originating in the area of Rochester, New York, most of these structures were built between 1825 and 1860 from Ice Age residue of glacially rounded native stones. The result was a unique native folk art of great skill and complexity. The First Universalist Church, the Ward House, and the District 5 Schoolhouse are the best documented and best preserved examples of early cobblestone construction.

OLD FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

The Old First Presbyterian Church (constructed 1849-1851) was designed late in William Strickland's career while he was engaged on the construction of the Tennessee State Capitol. Having started his architectural career as an apprentice to Benjamin Henry Latrobe, he advanced his knowledge of engineering and became one of the foremost architects in the United States. In 1818, Strickland won the competition for Nicholas Biddle's Second Bank of the United States which was a chaste imitation of Grecian architecture and its beautiful design put him in the first rank of architects. William Strickland worked in both the newest Gothic Style as well as the older Georgian mode. The Old Presbyterian Church is his largest, and only, full Egyptian temple and is known affectionately as "Karnak on the Cumberland."

FLORENCE GRISWOLD HOUSE AND MUSEUM
OLD LYME, CONNECTICUT

From 1899 to the 1930s, Miss Florence Ann Griswold (1850-1937) ran a boardinghouse for painters that was the center of the Lyme Art Colony. The house, a two-story, five-bay, twin-chimney frame house with a colossal Georgian Ionic portico, is now an art and history museum dedicated to the Lyme School of Art and American Impressionism. As one of the best known and most influential of the centers where artists in America painted, Old Lyme is part of the tradition that established regionalism—Santa Fe and Taos in the southwest, northeastern seaports on the Maine Coast and Cape Cod, Woodstock, New York, and New Hope, Pennsylvania. It was also one of the most famous art colonies in America.

WHARTON ESHERICK HOUSE AND STUDIO
PAOLI, PENNSYLVANIA

Wharton Esherick (1887-1970) had a long and productive career. The Studio is a building so essential to understanding his lifetime of achievement that a visit is required. He took forty years (1926-1966) to tame a hillside into his home. Esherick's stature as an artist and craftsman was a widely recognized fact by the end of the 1930s. The Esherick Studio, now a museum, is like Henry Chapman Mercer's "Fonthill" in nearby Doylestown: each belongs to that rare variety of historic house which is a completed expression of one man's intensely personal fusion of fine craftsmanship with wild flights of the imagination. There are few museums in which a sense of the artist's character remains so vivid.

PRINCIPIA COLLEGE HISTORIC DISTRICT
ELSAH, ILLINOIS

The Principia College Historic District represents the final phase of the career of Bernard Maybeck (1862-1957) as a designer of houses and public buildings, and as an architect significantly involved in campus planning and design for educational institutions. A recent poll of the American Institute of Architects rated Maybeck ninth on a proposed list of the ten greatest architects this country has produced. As early as 1949, Lewis Mumford said, "But for Bernard Maybeck's fine reticence, his work would have been hailed long ago as the West Coast counterpart of Wright's prairie architecture."

THE MAJESTIC THEATRE
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

The great movie palaces gradually replaced burlesque as entertainment within everyone's reach, rich and poor alike. In the 1920s and 1930s, the picture palace flourished, in big cities and small towns, as fantasy worlds into which anyone could escape for a few hours. When the boom was over, it left remnants of this glittering age across America and a handful have been reused and restored. The Majestic Theatre, which opened in 1929, is one of the few remaining atmospheric/fantasy palaces in the United States and one of the most remarkable and faithfully restored theaters in the Southwest.

MOUNTAIN LAKE SANCTUARY AND SINGING TOWER
LAKE WALES, FLORIDA

Known today as Bok Tower Gardens, the sanctuary occupies 130 acres in central Florida and was the product of the philanthropy of Edward W. Bok (1863-1930), a native of the Netherlands who achieved stature in the United States as editor of *The Ladies' Home Journal*. Formally dedicated on February 1, 1929, by President Calvin Coolidge as a gift for visitation to the American people, the sanctuary and tower express Bok's concern for world peace and beautification, themes interwoven into the architecture and artistry of the tower and surrounding landscape. In their design and craftsmanship they reflect the achievements of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and Milton B. Medary.

PREPARED BY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE/WASHINGTON OFFICE/HISTORY DIVISION

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H30(418)

MAR 8 1993

Memorandum

To: Secretary

Through: Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

MAR 10 1993

From: Acting Director, National Park Service

Subject: Designation of 21 Properties as National Historic Landmarks: Request for Secretarial Action

At a meeting on February 3, 1993, the National Park System Advisory Board recommended designation of the following properties as National Historic Landmarks:

HISTORIC CONTACT THEME STUDY

1. **NAUSET ARCHEOLOGICAL DISTRICT,** CAPE COD NATIONAL SEASHORE, EASTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
2. **MINISINK ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE,** DELAWARE WATER GAP NATIONAL RECREATION AREA, SUSSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY, & PIKE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
3. **WARDS POINT ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE,** TOTTENVILLE, NEW YORK
4. **FORT MASSAPEAG ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE,** OYSTER BAY, NEW YORK

INDIVIDUAL ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES

5. **BROOKS RIVER ARCHEOLOGICAL DISTRICT,** KATMAI NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE, BRISTOL BAY BOROUGH, ALASKA
6. **AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND,** NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

WOMENS HISTORY THEME STUDY

7. **ALICE AUSTEN HOUSE,** STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK
8. **KATE CHOPIN HOUSE,** CLOUTIERVILLE, LOUISIANA
9. **BIRDCRAFT MUSEUM AND SANCTUARY,** FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT
10. **PICOTTE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL,** WALTHILL, NEBRASKA
11. **IDA TARBELL HOUSE,** EASTON, CONNECTICUT

ENGINEERING

12. **ST. CLAIR RIVER TUNNEL,** PORT HURON, MICHIGAN

PREPARED BY: George Mendez G.; *TELEPHONE*: 202/343-8165

WESTWARD EXPANSION

13. **BEGINNING POINT OF THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE LAND SURVEY,** LEE, PHILLIPS, & MONROE COUNTIES, ARKANSAS

ART & ARCHITECTURE

14. **CANTERBURY SHAKER VILLAGE,** CANTERBURY, NEW HAMPSHIRE
15. **COBBLESTONE HISTORIC DISTRICT,** CHILDS, NEW YORK
16. **OLD FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,** NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
17. **FLORENCE GRISWOLD HOUSE,** OLD LYME, CONNECTICUT
18. **WHARTON ESHERICK HOUSE AND STUDIO,** PAOLI, PENNSYLVANIA
19. **PRINCIPIA COLLEGE HISTORIC DISTRICT,** ELSAH, ILLINOIS
20. **MAJESTIC THEATRE,** SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
*21. **MOUNTAIN LAKE SANCTUARY AND SINGING TOWER,** LAKE WALES, FLORIDA

In accordance with National Historic Landmarks Program regulations, the Board reviewed the studies nominating these properties for Landmark status and found that the properties meet National Historic Landmarks Program criteria. The Board, therefore, voted to recommend that they be designated as National Historic Landmarks. None of the parties required to be notified of a Landmark nomination proposal objects to these nominations.

I recommend that you approve the Board's recommendations and designate as National Historic Landmarks the 21 properties listed above.

APPROVE: _____ DISAPPROVE: _____

DATE: APR 19 1993 DATE: _____

*Due to Adminstrative confusion, this property was referred to by this name in the Advisory Board Meeting and in this designation memorandum. All earlier references to the property (and the owner's preference) is by the name of BOK TOWER GARDENS. That is the name of the property that is placed on the NHL plaque and the name by which it is referred to in the NHL files in Washington, DC and in any other official listing of this property. Mountain Lake Sanctuary and Singing Tower and BOK TOWER GARDENS are one and the same property. Any future reference to this property is to be by the name of BOK TOWER GARDENS.

P. Henry
Staff Historian
NHL Survey
10/19/93

ATTACHMENTS

Bleny for Ed Bearss
7/22/93

KB Brower
7/23/93

7/29

Brown 7/30

Cleary 8/4

8/4

AUG 5 1993

H3417(418)

Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hutchison:

I am pleased to inform you that **MAJESTIC THEATRE** in San Antonio, Texas, has been found to possess national significance in the history of the United States. As a result, the Secretary of the Interior has designated it a National Historic Landmark on April 19, 1993.

The purpose of landmark designation is to identify and recognize nationally significant sites and to encourage their owners to preserve them. Landmarks are chosen after careful study by the National Park Service. They are evaluated by the National Park System Advisory Board and designated by the Secretary of the Interior in accordance with the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Designation as a National Historic Landmark automatically places a property in the National Register of Historic Places, if it is not already so listed, and extends to it the safeguards and benefits provided by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and other Federal laws protecting historic properties.

The owner of a Landmark, upon application, will be awarded a bronze plaque. We are notifying the owner of the property's designation and providing the appropriate application forms.

We are pleased to include **MAJESTIC THEATRE** on the roll of National Historic Landmarks as a significant representative of our Nation's heritage.

Sincerely,

signed
Roger G. Kennedy
Director

SIMILAR LETTERS SENT TO:

Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Phil Gramm
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Henry B. Gonzalez
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

cc: 1200 (RMRO) G. Kendrick
7000 (SWRO) N. Mangum
001 RF
190 CL
400 RF
418 Pitts
418 MAJESTIC THEATRE (NHL)

PHenry:06/08/93
CHANGO ELECTRONICO/RCD #2:93-WIN:MAJ-D.LTR

H3417(418)

AUG 9 1993

Ms. Jocelyn L. Straus
President & Founding Chairman
Las Casas Foundation
P.O. Box 15873
San Antonio, Texas 78212

Dear Ms. Straus:

I am pleased to inform you that **MAJESTIC THEATRE** in San Antonio, Texas, has been found to possess national significance in the history of the United States. As a result, the Secretary of the Interior has designated it a National Historic Landmark on April 19, 1993.

The purpose of landmark designation is to identify and recognize nationally significant sites and to encourage their owners to preserve them. Landmarks are chosen after careful study by the National Park Service. They are evaluated by the National Park System Advisory Board and designated by the Secretary of the Interior in accordance with the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Designation as a National Historic Landmark automatically places a property in the National Register of Historic Places, if it is not already so listed, and extends to it the safeguards and benefits provided by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and other Federal laws protecting historic properties.

You are eligible to receive a bronze plaque to commemorate the designation of this property. Copies of the plaque application form are enclosed. Please complete the form in triplicate and return two copies to the National Historic Landmarks Coordinator identified on the form. You may retain the third copy for your records.

Unless you specify otherwise, the plaque will bear the name of the property as it appears above. The plaque has a standard text, except for the name of the property (a maximum of two lines) and the year of designation. If you have questions about the plaque, such as the precise text to appear, please contact the National Historic Landmarks Coordinator identified on the form.

The National Park Service will be pleased to assist you if you wish to arrange a ceremony for the presentation of the plaque. Such a ceremony should be scheduled a minimum of several months after notice of designation to provide time to cast the plaque and to arrange the participation of appropriate officials in the ceremony.

We are pleased to include **MAJESTIC THEATRE** on the roll of National Historic Landmarks as a significant representative of our Nation's heritage.

Sincerely,

s/Ben Levy
Acting Chief Historian

Edwin C. Bearss
Chief Historian

Enclosures

OWN: Ms. Jocelyn L. Straus
President & Founding Chairman
Las Casas Foundation
P.O. Box 15873
San Antonio, Texas 78212

SIMILAR LETTERS (WITHOUT PLAQUE INFORMATION) SENT TO:

HEO: Honorable Nelson W. Wolff
Mayor of the City of San Antonio
P.O. Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

SHPO: Mr. Curtis Tunnell
Executive Director
Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276, Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

cc: Ms. Mary Margaret McAllen
Projects Director
Las Casas Foundation
P.O. Box 15873
San Antonio, Texas 78212

bcc: 1200 (RMRO) G. Kendrick
7000 (SWRO) N. Mangum
001 RF
400 RF
418 Pitts
418 MAJESTIC THEATRE (NHL)

PHenry:06/08/93
CHANGO ELECTRONICO/RCD #2:93-WIN:MAJ-B.LTR

September 16,1993
DATE

MR. GREG KENDRICK
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS COORDINATOR
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
12795 WEST ALAMEDA PARKWAY
P.O. BOX 25287
DENVER, COLORADO 80225-0287

TELEPHONE: 303/969-2875

DEAR MR. KENDRICK:

As the owner(s) of Majestic Theatre

located in San Antonio (City) Bexar (County) Texas (State)

(I, We) hereby make application for a bronze plaque identifying the property as a National Historic Landmark.

1. Fully conscious of the high responsibility to the Nation that goes with the ownership and care of a property classified as having national significance and worthy of National Historic Landmark status, (I, we) agree to preserve, so far as practicable and to the best of (my, our) ability, the historical values of the site that satisfy the criteria for national significance.

2. (I, We) agree to permit periodic inspection of the property by a representative of the National Park Service for the purpose of monitoring its integrity and the nature and degree of any threats thereto.

3. (I, We) agree that, should the Landmark designation ever be revoked in accordance with the procedures outlined in the National Historic Landmarks regulations, the bronze plaque will be surrendered upon request to the National Park Service.

4. (I, We) further agree to affix the plaque for public view and in an appropriate manner.

Sincerely,

Mary Margaret McAllen, Projects Director

Mary Margaret McAllen Projects Director Las Casas Foundation

NAME

222 E. Houston, Suite 550

STREET/P.O. BOX

San Antonio, Texas 78205

CITY/STATE/ZIP

(210) 223-4343

TELEPHONE NUMBER

OCT 5 1993

H3417 (RMR-PR)

Mary Margaret Allen
222 East Houston, Suite 550
San Antonio, Texas 78205

Dear Ms Allen:

I am pleased to notify you that we have ordered the bronze plaque for the Majestic Theatre National Historic Landmark (NHL). We will forward the plaque to you upon completion.

If you are interested, the National Park Service would be happy to provide a representative to speak and present the plaque at a plaque presentation or NHL recognition ceremony. Please contact Bob Lyon at (303) 969-2875, if we may provide assistance with a presentation ceremony or answer questions regarding NHLs.

Thank you for your commitment to our Nation's historic resources.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Spude

Robert L. Spude, Chief
Division of National Preservation Programs

bcc to:
Jim Charleton, WASO-418, History Division
Chief, Southwest Cultural Resources Center

BLyon:lsl:10/1/93:2875:c:plaqord.mt

H3417 (RMR-PR)

DEC 0 1 1993

Mary Margaret McAllen, Projects Director
Las Casas Foundation
222 E. Houston, Suite 550
San Antonio, Texas 78205

Dear Ms. McAllen:

I am pleased to notify you that the bronze plaque for **Majestic Theatre National Historic Landmark** (NHL) has been completed. We are forwarding the plaque to you under separate cover. Upon delivery, please contact Gregory D. Kendrick at the above address or at (303) 969-2875 to confirm that you received the plaque and that it is accurate.

If you are interested, the National Park Service would be happy to provide a representative to speak and present the award at an NHL recognition or plaque presentation ceremony. Please contact Mr. Kendrick if we may provide assistance with an event or answer questions regarding NHLs.

Thank you for your commitment to our Nation's historic resources.

Sincerely,

/s/ Ronald E. Everhart

Robert M. Baker
Regional Director

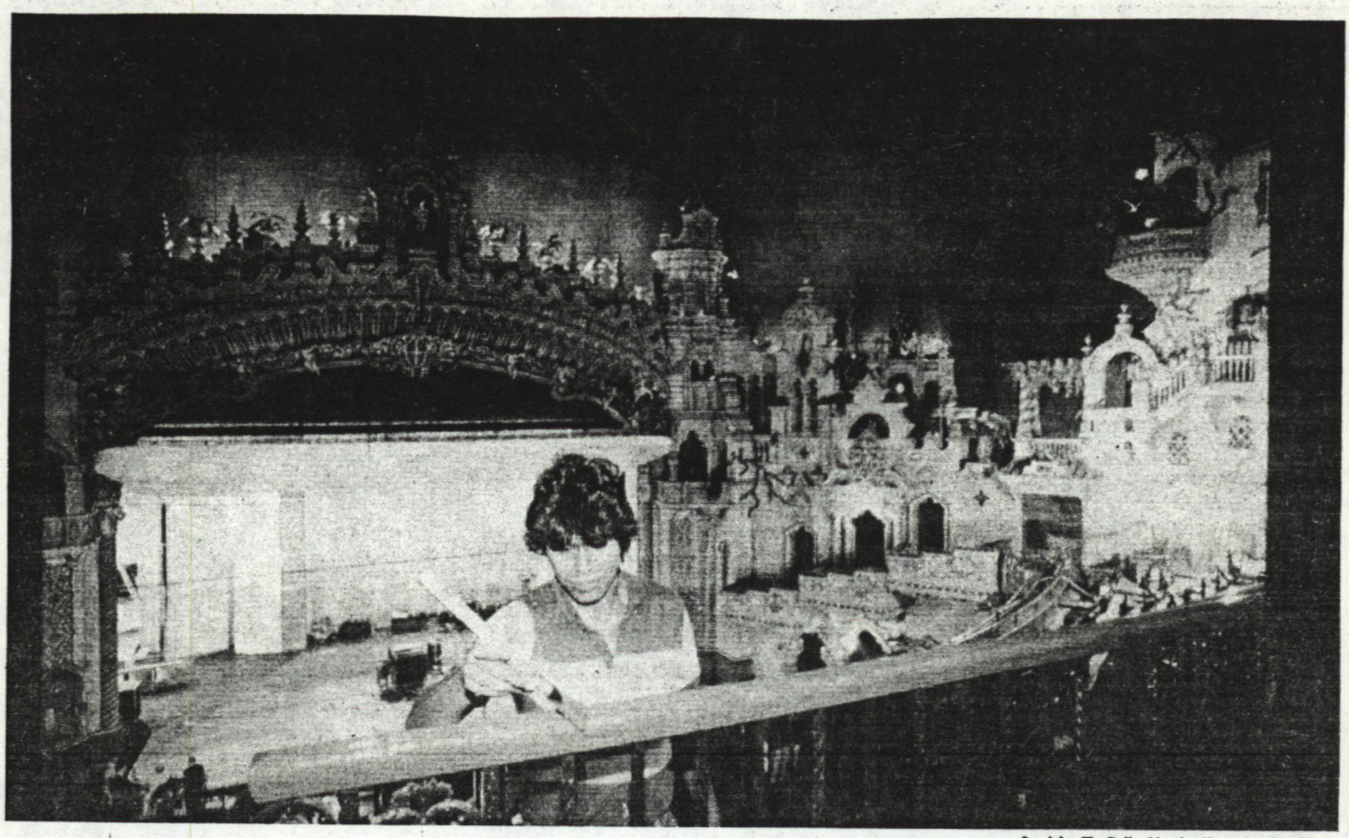
bcc:
SWR-RD
Jim Charleton, WASO-History Division

Lyon:sc:11/30/93:969-2875
q:\majestic.nhl

Wednesday, September 20, 1989

The Arts

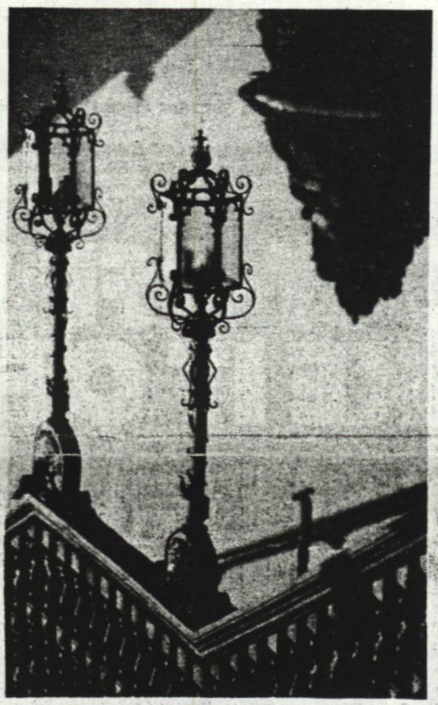
The Dallas Morning News



Special to The Dallas Morning News: Associated Press

San Antonio's 60-year-old Majestic Theatre, restored to its former glory, is now the home of the city's symphony.

A hall for all of San Antonio



The decor is exotic.

Community celebrates historic theater's rebirth

By David Dillon
Architecture Critic of The Dallas Morning News

ARCHITECTURE

SAN ANTONIO — A week after the opening of the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, the San Antonio Symphony moved into new quarters in the Majestic Theatre, a renovated 1920s movie palace near the downtown River Walk. The event marked the 50th anniversary of the orchestra and the 60th of the theater, and both dates were suitably commemorated on opening night.

First the president of the symphony asked anyone who had attended the orchestra's inaugural concert in 1939 to stand. Several hundred people rose. He then asked everyone who had been at the opening of the Majestic to do the same. Several hundred more got up. Everyone clapped for everyone else. Finally he summoned a violist who'd been with the orchestra since the beginning and presented her with a bouquet of red roses.

There were no references to world-class this, or international that. This was pre-eminently a local event, a celebration of community ties. Everything else, including for the most part the program, was secondary.

Thanks to broad community support, the San Antonio Symphony now occupies one of the most colorful and exotic concert halls in the country. The Majestic was designed in 1929 by Chicago architect John Eberson, the king of the atmospheric designers, in what might be called a Mexican-Moorish-Persian style. (Mr. Eberson's Majestic in Dallas is a model of decorative restraint compared to its San Antonio predecessor).

The goal of every atmospheric was to provide a three-dimensional elaboration of the fantasies on the screen, so that even when the movie stunk nobody would leave without feeling entertained.

"To be a successful theater architect, one must be a showman," Mr. Eberson

Please see SAN ANTONIO on Page 14C.

San Antonio

Continued from Page 5C.

wrote. "I want to create theatres where pictures can be enjoyed in restful and beautiful surroundings rather than one that would be a mere flaunt of lavishness."

Yet Mr. Eberson pulled out all the stops in the Majestic. In the entrance he installed a large aquarium, encased in ornate ceramic tile, and a fountain with a naked nymph called "Sweet Grapes." Both now are being restored.

The lobby resembles a set from the *The Cisco Kid*, with dark, ornamental plaster beams and assorted balconies and staircases.

The auditorium ceiling is sky blue, an atmospheric staple, and decorated with twinkling stars. Swirls of cirrus clouds, produced by a concealed machine, float toward the proscenium during performances. Along the side walls, like gigantic maquettes, are elaborate three-dimensional scenes of village life, including towers, plazas, tiled roofs and dozens of white doves and a preening peacock that are part of local cinematic folklore. The original reliefs also contained authentic dried plants and flowers to heighten the verisimilitude, but these eventually crumbled.

The San Antonio Symphony, like many American orchestras these days, has been bouncing around for years looking for a home. Most recently it had performed in the cavernous Cockrell auditorium at HemisFair; before that its season was split between the municipal auditorium and Laurie Auditorium at Trinity University. None of these spaces was satisfactory, and as San Antonio's convention business boomed, getting choice dates at Cockrell became increasingly difficult.

The orchestra had rehearsed in the Majestic off and on for a decade. But the Majestic renovation didn't get off the ground until a group of ardent supporters, led by Jocelyn Straus and Realtor Russell Kyse, became involved. Through a byzantine sequence of negotiations, lasting more than two years, the city acquired the Majestic and the adjacent Empire Theater, then leased both for $1 a year to Las Casas, a non-profit preservation foundation headed by Ms. Straus, on condition that the organization raise the money for restoration and find a manager.

In less than a year Las Casas raised $4.4 million to restore the Majestic, and needs only another $500,000 to complete the project. The organization then plans to restore the Empire for chamber music and repertory theater. With approximately 900 seats, it will be roughly a third the size of the Majestic.

The Majestic restoration is a joint venture of movie-palace restorers Ray Shephardson and Sonya Winner of Detroit and San Antonio architect Milton Babbitt. While compromised here and there by a shortage of funds, the designers have obviously spent the $4.4 million carefully and sensitively.

Much of the budget went for new lighting and mechanical equipment, and to restore the acres of ornamental plaster, which had deteriorated so badly that Mr. Shephardson once compared the interior to "the last days of Pompeii."

Columns, ceilings and balcony fronts have all been painstakingly restored by local craftsmen, some of whom, in true San Antonio tradition, were the fourth generation of their families to work on the theater. The great-grandson of a plasterer on the original Majestic was the model for recasting the arms and legs of the plaster statues above the proscenium. His father and grandfather also worked on the restoration.

The Majestic is vast — three balconies and 2,400 seats — yet also wide and low, which means that it lacks height needed for oustanding sound. To compensate, acoustician Christopher Jaffe — a finalist for the Meyerson — inserted a prefabricated acoustical shell into the proscenium to bounce sound out into the auditorium.

He also has installed an electronic reflective energy system, a network of concealed speakers that mix and intensify the reflected sound to make it richer and more brilliant. Mr. Jaffe has used this system in many of his halls, and says that when fully operational it will "have the effect of raising the roof and narrowing the width of the hall.

"Twenty years ago we could have pulled out all the plaster, gutted the place and probably got rave reviews," he says. "But you can't do that today. Audiences are much more demanding."

The acoustics on opening night were serviceable, if not remarkable, and by all accounts far superior to the Cockrell and other halls used in the past. The major problems were excessive ambient noise from slamming doors and whirring margarita machines, which can be corrected easily, and deadness under the first balcony, which will be more difficult to correct.

Yet even with the restoration and the electronic enhancements, nobody, Mr. Jaffe included, expects the Majestic to rival the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam or the Musikvereinsaal in Vienna. It is a vast, multipurpose hall that must meet the needs of rock musicians and touring Broadway shows as well as the symphony. No hall can serve so many masters well, though the Majestic may succeed better than most.

The San Antonio Symphony now has a house to call its own, in the center of the city, in a place that many residents remember warmly. The reopening of the Majestic was as much a celebration of the past as a glimpse of the future, in a restored building that is a repository for the community memory as well as a place for music.

San Antonio Express-News
Wednesday, July 11, 1990
Page 1

PHOTO BY JOE BARRERA JR.

First lady Barbara Bush (from left), Danielle Mitterand of France, Mila Mulroney of Canada, Livia Andreotti of Italy and Sachiyo Kaifu of Japan listen as Monsignor Lawrence Stuebben, vicar general of the Archdiocese of San Antonio and representing Archbishop Patrick Flores, explains the Rose Window at Mission San Jose during the group's visit to the San Antonio area Tuesday.

Mrs. Bush, others get whirlwind tour of S.A.

Group gets taste of 'wonderful, exciting' city

By J. MICHAEL PARKER
and SUSIE PHILLIPS GONZALEZ
Express-News Staff Writers

As their husbands discussed issues affecting the future of world relationships, the wives of five major world leaders came to San Antonio on Tuesday for a taste of Texas' most colorful and diverse major city.

Although no interviews or news conferences were allowed, first lady Barbara Bush gave a smile and a thumbs-up sign when a reporter asked how the other first ladies in her entourage enjoyed seeing the Alamo, Texas' number one tourist attraction.

Mrs. Bush, Danielle Mitterand of France, Mila Mulroney of Canada, Livia Andreotti of Italy, Sachiyo Kaifu of Japan and 14 other wives of officials participating in the Economic Summit of Industrialized Nations in Houston were proclaimed honorary alcaldes — mayors — of historic La Villita by San Antonio Mayor Lila Cockrell at a brief ceremony before some 500 spectators in front of the Alamo.

Mrs. Bush said Texas is becoming famous for female mayors and now has 19 new ones.

"Maybe with this many women mayors, we can accomplish many wonderful things," she quipped.

Mrs. Bush said she and the other summit spouses "really had a wonderful day," and added she "wanted

See MRS. BUSH, Page 5-A

Mrs. Bush, others get whirlwind tour

Continued from Page 1-A

to show off to George's and my friends a different part of Texas, a side of Texas they might not see — a wonderful, exciting and thrilling city."

The six-hour tour took them to Mission San Jose, the Alamo Heights home of Bush's friend Joci Straus, the Majestic Theater and the Alamo.

At San Jose, the "Queen of the Missions," the visitors saw a glimpse of life 250 years ago at one of the early religious, cultural, social, agricultural and industrial centers of Texas.

Mission San Jose

Arriving on the mission grounds, they were entertained by the Mariachis Las Campanas de America.

Inside the historic church, they beheld a large, brightly colored stained-glass image of a descending dove superimposed on a large orange tongue of fire and were greeted by the Mariachis de Colores, singing their festive songs "Cantale" and "De Colores."

Monsignor Lawrence Stuebben, vicar general of the Archdiocese of San Antonio and representing Archbishop Patrick Flores, congratulated Mrs. Bush for bringing her international guests to an historic and sacred place.

"Mission San Jose speaks of the earliest inhabitants of these lands, the native Americans or Indian people. It speaks of a thriving community that existed before our nation was founded," Stuebben said.

"This mission speaks of faith, hope and love — not as distant reminders of the past, but as active ingredients in the present lives of people," the priest said.

Rose Window

The first ladies inspected the exterior mission walls and the famous Rose Window, whose story was explained by Henry Guerra, their tour guide and chairman of the Bexar County Historical Society.

As the entourage departed, Stuebben described Mrs. Bush as "a lovely lady, very much at ease and easy to be with."

"The others were the same way. There was no question their reaction to what they saw when they entered the church was, 'Wow!' " he said.

"Mrs. Bush commented on the beauty of the mission, and some of the ladies hadn't expected the music.

"Some of them hadn't realized the mission had been a fortified community, and they asked questions about the walls.

"They were interested in what happened here 200 years ago, but they also were interested to learn it is still an active parish," Stuebben said.

Same basic issues

The priest called Mrs. Bush's decision to bring her guests to San Jose fortuitious because the mission dealt with the same basic issues of life that are being addressed at the economic summit in Houston.

"All the ladies enjoyed themselves and seemed very interested in what they were seeing," Guerra said after the first ladies had left the Alamo.

"Mrs. Bush wanted to know how much of the fabrication of the mission that is present today is original and how much is restoration.

"Several of the others asked how the Indians lived and what they ate in the 18th century," Guerra said.

He said that, during the private luncheon at Straus' home, the first ladies learned about the nearby Olmos Dam and the 1921 flood.

"We expressed regret that we didn't have time to show them the River Walk," Guerra said.

"Mrs. Bush is very aware of the crowds. On the bus, whenever she would see even five or six people waving, she would tell the others, 'They're waving at you. Wave back,' and they did," he said.

Majestic Theater

The waving continued at the Majestic Theater, where a crowd of about 1,000 children who attend summer recreation programs were admitted into the theater and issued miniature Texas flags to wave when the dignitaries entered.

The children were entertained by the Ballet Folklorico de Navarro and singer Sandy Wyatt before the wives arrived and again afterward.

Mrs. Bush clapped her hands and tapped her fingers against the railing of the "atmospheric theater" in rhythm to the spirited music, as did Mrs. Mulroney and Mrs. Kaifu.

Emcee for the performance was Bill Swinney, an actor and former Alamo Heights teacher, who told the children and the wives the history of the Majestic.

The Mariachis Las Campanas de America again performed — this time a medley of Mexican songs plus "The Yellow Rose of Texas" — and all the entertainers led a round of singing "America the Beautiful."

Mrs. Bush and the four other leaders' wives then took the stage and were introduced to the crowd. They were greeted with enthusiastic cheers and more flag waving from the children.

EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

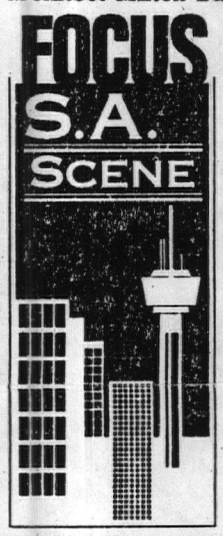
Las Casas Foundation kicks off restoration campaign

By MIKE GREENBERG
Express-News Senior Critic

Las Casas Foundation announced Monday it would launch a $3.5 million fund drive to restore the Empire Theater.

Built in 1914 as a 1,700-seat live theater, the Empire went dark in 1978 after a long period of decline. Most of the original baroque plaster work remains intact, though dirty, damaged and in some places covered by later additions.

Under renovation plans outlined by architect Milton Babbitt, the theater interior would be brought close to its original appearance, but seating capacity would be reduced to about 900 with the use of wider seats and, where possible, more generous row spacing.



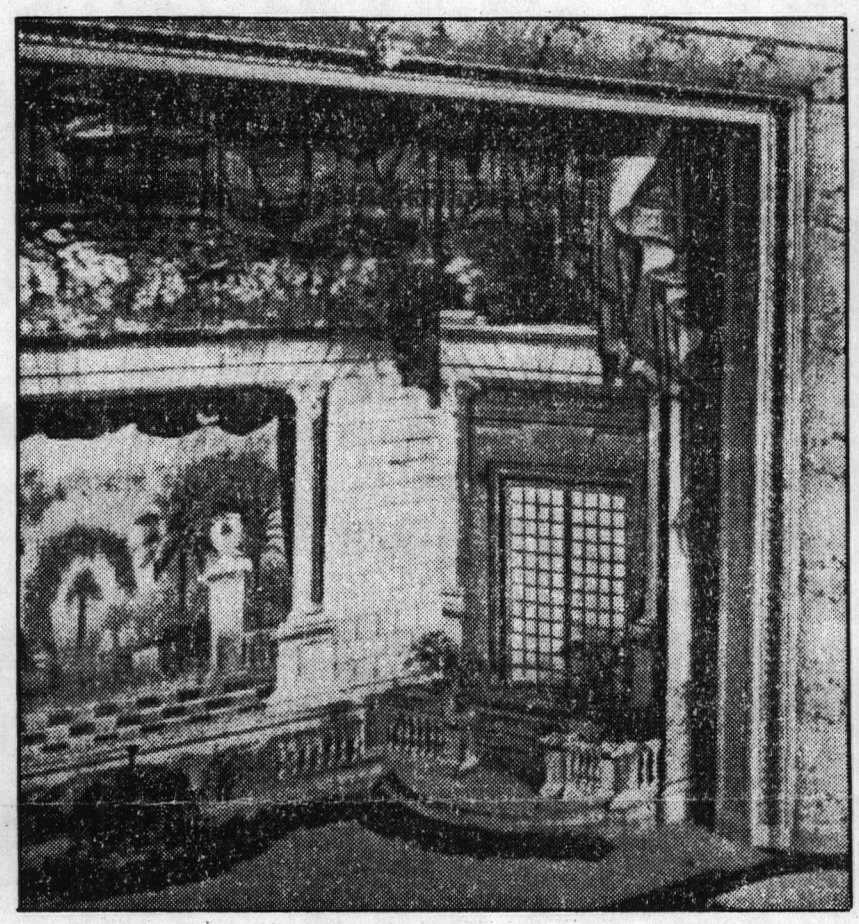
Only a few rows of seating would be restored on the second balcony, most of which would be used for technical facilities.

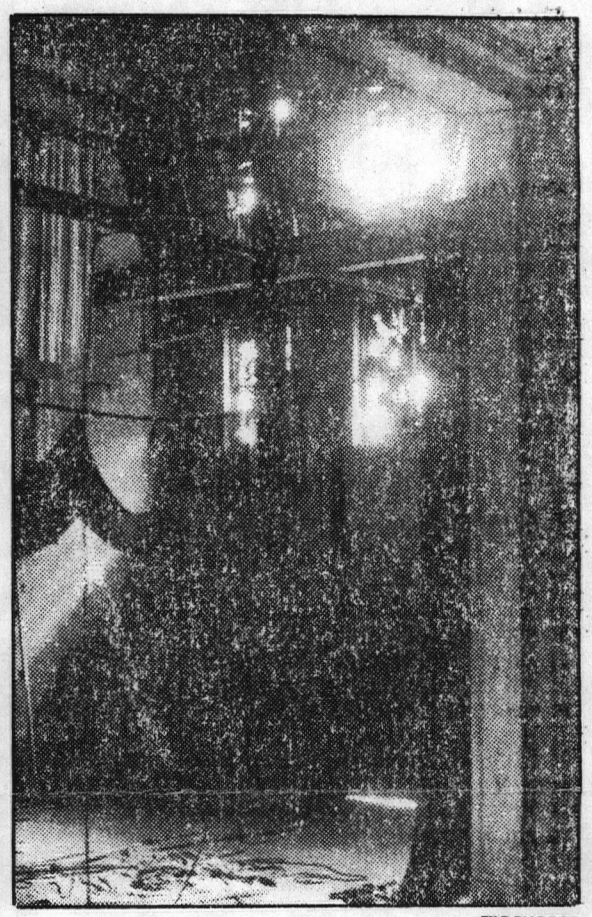
With its stage 30-feet deep and a proscenium opening roughly 36-feet square, the Empire is suitable for much live theater, modest-scale dance and chamber music.

"This little theater reminds me very much of a European opera house," Las Casas Chairwoman Jocelyn Straus told reporters gathered in front of the Empire.

Las Casas has already raised $5.4 million for the first phase of renovation of the adjacent Majestic Theater, which reopened in 1989 as the home of the San Antonio Symphony and the Arts Center Enterprises series of touring Broadway shows.

But the foundation still has not raised the money to complete work on the Majestic, including reopening the upper balcony. Straus said the directors of Las Casas had "agreed to juggle two balls at one time" because they thought it would be easier to raise money for two projects going on simultaneously.





FILE PHOTOS

This is a view of the original Empire Theater's stage, left, as it was in its heyday. To the right, is the same stage after years of neglect. The Las Casas Foundation is raising a $3.5 million fund drive to restore the theater.

The Empire restoration will begin this summer with a $300,000 project to clean the theater, build restrooms, install lights and meet fire and safety code requirements.

Made minimally functional, the theater would be opened for partial use until money is available to complete the project with plaster repair, stage equipment, house seating, electrical work and air conditioning and heating.

For more than a generation before it closed in 1978, the theater went through a downward spiral of showing second-run and third-run "B" movies and exploitation films. Few San Antonians have seen the Empire interior in reasonably good condition, and the plain brick exterior offers no clue of the space inside.

"Our feeling is that when people see this space, they'll want to see it finished," Straus said, explaining why the restoration will occur in phases.

Las Casas is contractually obligated to complete restoration of both the Majestic and Empire theaters, which are owned by the city of San Antonio.

Over the long term, Straus said, "We also hope we will be able to help others restore other cultural buildings" — a reference to the unused Aztec Theater, which is now owned by the San Antonio Conservation Society.

Potential users of the restored Empire include the San Antonio Symphony, which wants the space for chamber-orchestra concerts. Straus said that choral groups have expressed interest in the space. She also called it "a perfect venue for theater."

Although the theater is about the same size as many European opera houses, its wing space is small, and there is no longer an orchestra pit.

The first phase of the Majestic renovation included integration of the two buildings' basements.

GREAT AMERICAN CINEMAS

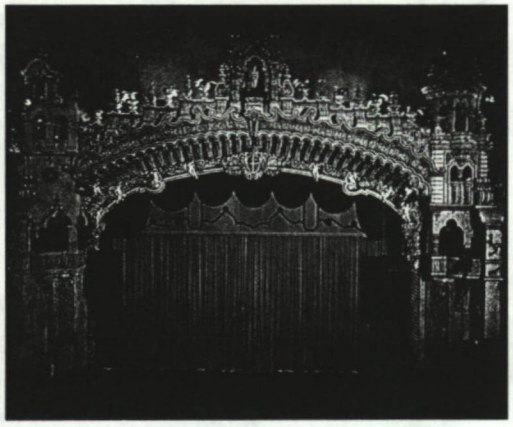
THE MAJESTIC THEATRE

San Antonio, Texas

The Majestic Theatre in San Antonio, Texas, truly mirrors the glory of the Southwest. Rich in design, and described as Mexican/ Moorish/ Persian in style, it reflects the great theater-building era of the '20s and '30s. Opened in June 1929, The San Antonio Majestic Theatre was the newest addition to a series of theaters funded and built by Karl Hoblitzelle, theater magnate and founder of the Interstate Amusement Company. The San Antonio Majestic was the largest theater of the time in the Southwest, seating 4,000 patrons.

Hoblitzelle dedicated himself to bringing entertainment to areas of the country where previously such things had been unavailable. He insisted that the entertainment be "clean and wholesome," suitable for the entire family and acceptable to the local churches that monitored theatrical goings-on. Within these guidelines, the Majestic put on vaudeville shows and presented the latest talking movies.

The Majestic was designed by John Eberson, a longtime colleague of Hoblitzelle, and a champion of the concept of the "atmospheric theater." The notion was that, upon entering the theater auditorium, one was transported from an ordinary theater into a fabulous fantasy land. The San Antonio Majestic exudes the atmosphere of a picturesque village plaza at twilight that transforms to starlight as the feature presentation begins. The goal of the "atmospheric theater" was to provide complete sensory experience, a three-dimensional complement to the fantasies played out on screen. Hoblitzelle /Eberson theaters were truly "everyman palaces," providing a taste of the exotic for anyone with the price of admittance.



A part of the Majestic's ambience and appeal was its air conditioning, featured prominently in the grand-opening advertising campaign. The first air-conditioned building in San Antonio, the Majestic was billed as "an acre of cool comfortable seats," a major attraction for a theater situated in the Southwest. Ladies, not certain what to expect, wore fur coats to opening night, June 14, 1929, prepared to enjoy the festivities despite the possibility of frosty temperatures.

Today the Majestic is once again a focal point in the community. Recently restored to its former opulence, it's now the home of the San Antonio Symphony and host to a variety of entertainment. The Majestic is the flagship project for the development of a Cultural Arts District in downtown San Antonio and its renaissance provides a boost to the revival of that area. *AMC*

— by Jennifer Wescott

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PUBLISHER
John B. Caldwell
EDITOR
Robert Moses
ART DIRECTOR
Eleanor Ramsay
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The Washington Post

The San Antonio Arm-Twister

Jocelyn Straus, Hosting The Summit Side Trip

By Donnie Radcliffe
Washington Post Staff Writer

SAN ANTONIO, July 9—In the Old West she might have sold hunting licenses to the Indians and derby hats to the Texas Rangers. In the kinder, gentler New West she sells George Bush to Republicans and culture to San Antonians.

The Texas media call Jocelyn Levi Straus "indisputably the most influential woman in San Antonio." And anyone who can raise $4.4 million in 11 months to renovate an abandoned theater in a down-at-the-heels part of town can also call George Bush out of a Cabinet meeting.

At least that's the story on this 58-year-old patroness of the arts, whom Barbara Bush tapped to host a private luncheon Tuesday for herself and 17 other economic summit spouses.

"Joci" (pronounced Jahsi) Straus got the first hint that San Antonio might be on Mrs. Bush's itinerary the night of the Bushes' state dinner for Polish Prime Minister Tad-

See STRAUS, C2, Col. 1

BY DENNIS DUNLEAVY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Jocelyn Straus in the Majestic Theatre, for which she raised $4.4 million.

Bush Friend Joci Straus

STRAUS, From C1

eusz Mazowiecki. She and her husband, businessman Joe Straus Jr., were houseguests of the Bushes.

While some San Antonians think Houston "stole" the summit away from them, Joci Straus says George Bush indicated to her over an Oval Office breakfast last fall that that city had a virtual lock on the event.

"I said, 'Well, I understand that but I have a couple of reasons you ought to consider San Antonio,' " she recalled in a recent interview here. "When we went to the outer office he told John Sununu that 'my good friend Jocelyn has been in there lobbying me for the summit.' "

The lobbying didn't work, and neither did San Antonio's comprehensive proposal pointing out its history and facilities. While Barbara Bush's plan to bring summit wives here is regarded by some as a token gesture, her good friend Joci Straus doesn't see it that way.

"I don't think Barbara's decision is anything less than her desire to give her guests a real side trip and a look at a multicultural Texas city," she says.

Straus has known George Bush since he ran for the U.S. Senate in 1970. "I really hate to relate George Bush to a product, but I like sales and I want a good product. Some of us saw the potential was there. It was just a matter of projecting it—George and Barbara have grown so much."

She says politics fascinates her not because of power but because "you can make so many wonderful things happen behind the scenes. I'm really interested in seeing results. I don't care what party you belong to now that I've got a two-party system in Texas. I'm very good about saying, 'Just go to either one.' "

Her long years of raising money for Republican candidates and supporting the arts on the state and local levels were rewarded in 1988 when Ronald Reagan appointed her to a six-year term on the National Council on the Arts, the advisory arm of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Little did she expect to be embroiled in a controversy that would eventually rock the entire arts establishment. The furor over the Robert Mapplethorpe photographs precipitated what Straus calls "the council's biggest challenge, trying to keep our funding intact and our freedom of expression in place and assure the Congress we will do anything possible . . . to try to improve the way we operate."

She thinks she is among a council majority in believing it must guard against awarding grants to art that is "out-and-out debasing. I would be opposed to supporting a grant that I feel was so controversial in a negative way, because all we're doing is hurting the opportunity for others."

Mapplethorpe's work told a story of today's society, she says, adding, "we can't run from that." But his "overnight" fame has prompted others "to create what they think they can get away with," she says, and "I think we're being used as a whipping boy."

Here in San Antonio, her biggest challenge in the arts was raising $4.4 million to renovate the Majestic Theatre, which opened in 1929 and closed in 1974. For nine months she put the bite on suspecting contributors at elegant little onstage lunches and was turned down only once.

She is a stylish and petite woman with jet-black hair framing a cameo complexion, and her soft Texas drawl is like a finely honed knife—effectively persuasive. Born in Pennsylvania to a factory owner restless for the wide-open spaces, she grew up on a ranch her father bought during the Depression about the same time he bought a book on cattle, a Stetson hat, a pair of boots and a wood-paneled station wagon.

She married into San Antonio's wealthy Straus family, raised two daughters and a son and got into fund-raising on the neighborhood level by collecting for local causes.

In her Majestic Theatre crusade, she personalized her pitches to suit her prospects. For instance, she told a prominent San Antonio bird-hunter she had found him the perfect donation—the price of 50 stuffed birds, from parrots and wild Texas turkeys to preening peacocks, that would be perched along the interior balconies. And it worked. Today he tells everybody they're his birds.

The Majestic, considered by experts to be one of the most atmospheric theaters still standing anywhere, has a 2,500-seat auditorium that is a fantasy Mediterranean village at twilight. The "sky" twinkles with electric stars, and "clouds" are created by machines.

Racing the calendar to complete restoration in time for the San Antonio Symphony's 50th anniversary last fall, Straus bucked an economic downturn brought on by the decline in oil prices.

Instead of being turned away by San Antonio contributors, however, she found that the 60-year-old Majestic touched a nostalgic and responsive chord. "People were psychologically drained, dropping out of business right and left, and they needed something to believe in," she says. "This theater became that, connecting people's pasts with the present and making them feel good."

But the pressure on her, she says, was "scary"; she knew that if she didn't succeed the symphony would have no home and probably would go under.

The long-range plan of Las Casas Foundation, the umbrella group she started and chairs, is a cultural arts district that will serve as catalyst for revitalizing the downtown area. Next on the list for restoration is the nearby 800-seat Empire Theatre, which would be used by repertory and other smaller groups.

Meanwhile she doesn't miss a trick in raising money for unfinished projects at the Majestic. Tuesday Straus will add a special commemorative touch by informing Barbara Bush and her summit guests that to commemorate their visit, name plaques are being installed on the seats they occupy. Normally Straus asks for donations of up to $200 a seat from San Antonio benefactors, but Tuesday's are on the house.

Majestic brings downtown to life

By ISABEL VALLE

When the Majestic Theater re-opened its doors in September 1989, the organizers of the revitalization project were right on target — this project would transform the downtown area into a bustling arts district.

Today, 15 months after the doors swung open again, the dreary, dismal look of Houston Street has slowly crept away, cars pack nearby parking garages on show nights and area hotel restaurants are filled to near capacity on the evenings of Broadway shows and symphony concerts.

"I've seen a lot of changes that have occurred since I walked down that lonely street some years ago," said Jocelyn Straus.

Straus, a civic activist, heads the Las Casas Foundation, an organization formed for the preservation and restoration of historic buildings.

In the fall of 1988, the foundation announced a long-range plan to restore both the Majestic and Empire theaters to their original ornate splendor. Phase I of the renovation originally was to cost $3.1 million but was expanded to $4.4 million.

The city bought the Majestic and the adjacent Empire theaters and the land beneath both for $10.4 million, leasing the theaters to Las Casas to renovate.

It was through Las Casas that the 62-year-old historic theater has come alive again and brought back a bustling ambiance to the downtown area.

Since the theater re-opened in mid-September 1989, about a quarter of a million people have walked through the Majestic doors.

"Just in the past 15 months, we've had more people than in the last two years of operation," said Kirk Feldman, general manager of the Majestic Theater. "What we hoped would happen, happened. The public has responded and we are pleased that we have had such a great project."

Feldman attributes the high attendance to the Broadway shows and the performance of the San Antonio Symphony. He said the symphony has had record breaking seasons during the past two years and expects a continuous growth in attendance.

The 2,271-seat performance theater is the permanent home of the symphony and houses its executive and business offices, ticket center, and provides instrument and equipment storage and houses a sheet music library.

But the Majestic Theater is not the sole benefactor of the new thriving business.

Hotels, restaurants and parking near the 200 block of East Houston Street are also getting some of the financial benefits.

"The renovation of the Majestic Theater has been a great boost for the hotel. The two historical building are in a great business relationship," said John Vicente, general manager of the 80-year-old Sheraton Gunter Hotel.

Since the hotel is located right across the street from the theater, guests of the hotel usually include the cast and crew of Broadway shows, symphony conductors and performers. The hotel will also host cast parties and receptions for those in the symphony.

Cafe Suisse, located in the main lobby of the hotel, offers dinner specials on theater nights and patrons usually include some of the 2,000 members of the San Antonio Symphony.

"We have an excellent business relationship with the Majestic Theater and their clientele has been very good. The entire preservation of this historic block and the renovation of downtown is bringing in excellent opportunities for businesses in the area," Vicente said.

Around the corner of the theater is the St. Anthony Hotel that has also prospered from the re-opening of the Majestic.

Nick Ghawi, the hotel's general manager, said the hotel also receives many patrons for dinner before a show and many use the hotel's garage to park their cars.

"The heart of the city has definitely been brought back to life since the resto-

Continued on page 15

SAN ANTONIO BUSINESS JOURNAL

SPECIAL REPORT: Entertainment and Arts PUBLISHED DECEMBER 21, 1990

Majestic:

Continued from page 12

ration of the Majestic and this is just the beginning," Straus said. Indeed, the success of the theater is generating talk among investors to open additional restaurants and other businesses in the area.

> "I've seen a lot of changes that have occurred since I walked down that lonely street some years ago."

"When the time is right we will see that this area will be growing even more and that time will be when the economy starts climbing again," Straus said.

The restoration and re-opening of the theater is the beginning of what Straus and others of Las Casas Foundation have envisioned.

Phase II of the project, which calls for the completion of the upper balcony at the Majestic and the renovation of the Empire Theater, is now in the beginning stages.

The Empire will be restored into a 900-seat European-style theater that will be used for choral groups, repertoires and smaller performances.

With the completion of the upper balcony at the Majestic Theater, about 400 additional seats will be added.

"This increase in capacity will mean that we will be able to pay artists more money, therefore, we will be able to attract bigger-name artists," Feldman said.

The upper balcony will also be used as a tool to bring in new customers by offering discount tickets to senior citizens, military personnel, students and families.

"We want to make this something for everybody," Straus added.

Isabel Valle is a San Antonio free-lance writer.

INFORMATION FOR NOTICE LETTERS:

Exact name of property (this name will be used throughout the process and for purposes of listing and filing):
MAJESTIC THEATRE

Location of property (full address): The Majestic Theatre
230 East Houston Street
San Antonio, Texas 78205

Name, title(if any) and address of each owner of the property:
City of San Antonio leased to Las Casas Foundation
(for 40 years) P.O. Box 158
San Antonio TX 15873

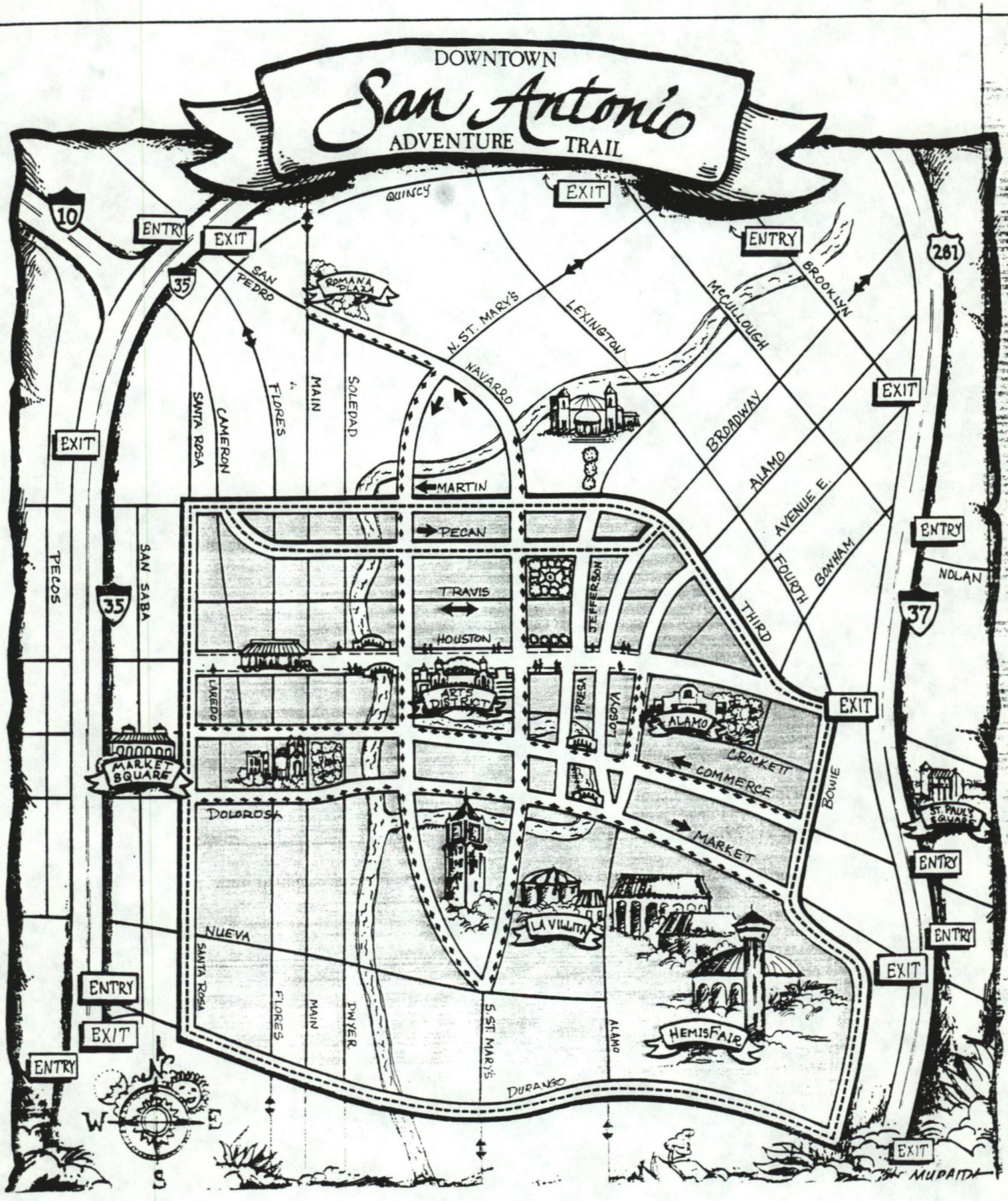
Is property public or private ownership? If multiple ownership, give status, public or private, for each owner
local public

Name, title, and address of the highest elected official for the jurisdiction named as location of property:
Nelson Wolff, Mayor
City of San Antonio P.O. Box 839966 S.A. TX (78283)

Name of the U.S. Representative Member of the district in which the property is located:
Henry B. Gonzales

Name of both Senators for the state in which the property is located:
Senator Phillip Graham
Senator Lloyd Benson

Name, title(if any), and address of other parties advisable to receive copies of notice:
Mary Margaret McAllen, Projects Director Las Casas Foundation
Jocelyn L. Straus, President + ~~Foundation~~ Founding Chairman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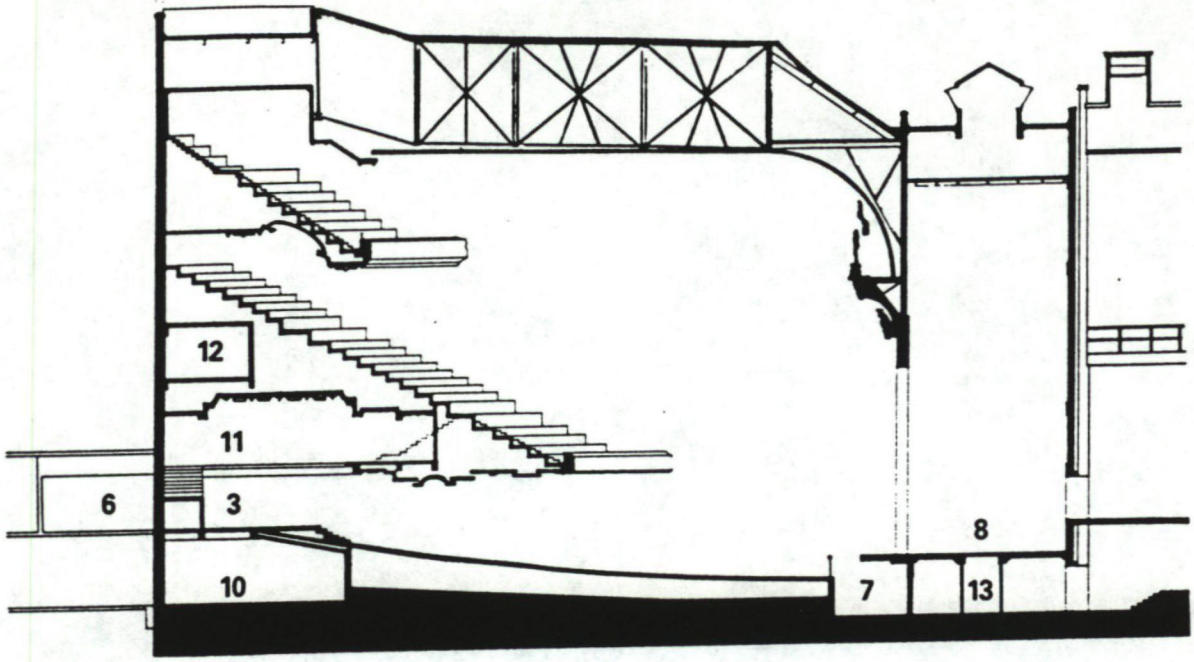
Majestic Theatre - San Antonio, Texas



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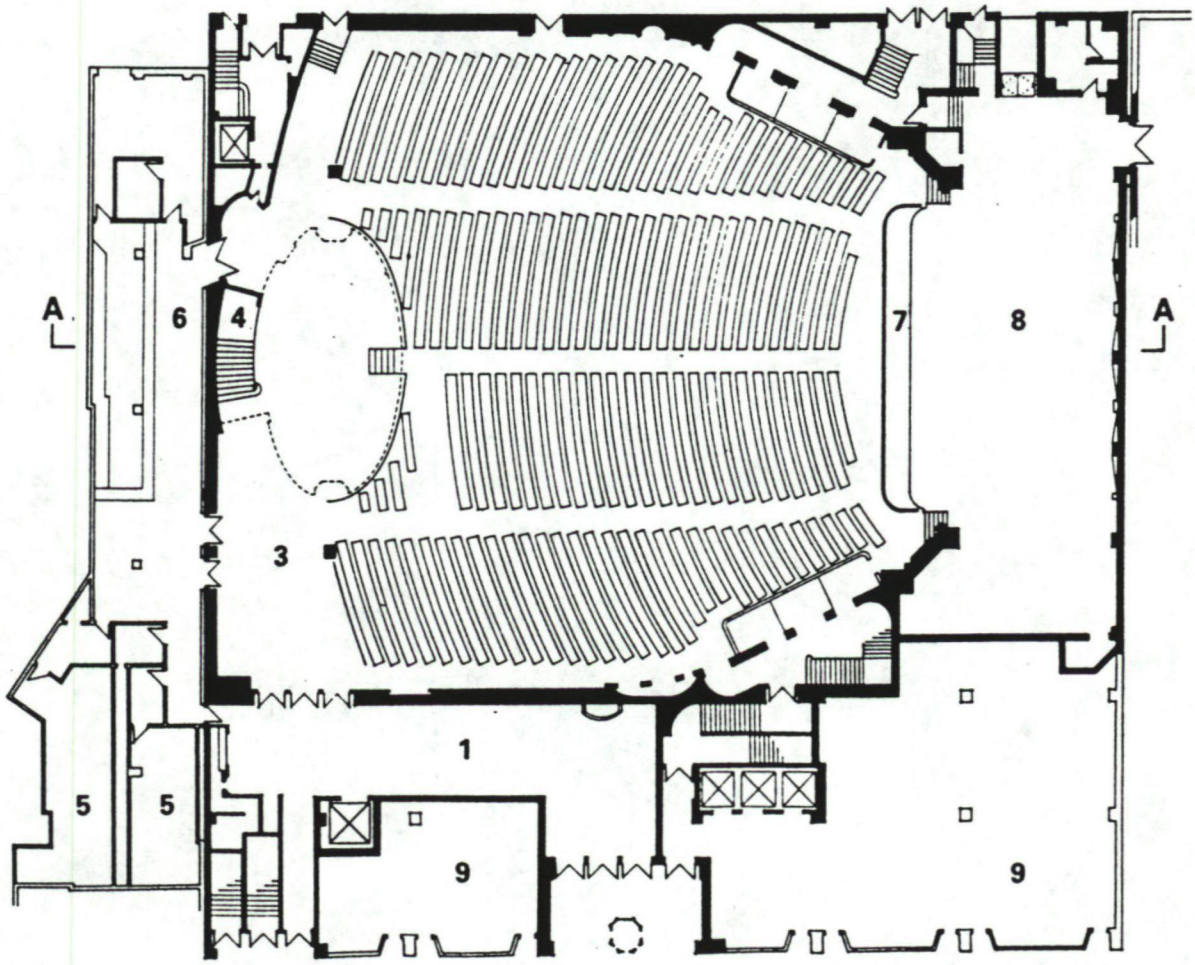

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