United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

SEE SITE FILE STAFF FOR
ORIGINAL PHOTO(S) OR MAP(S)

1. Name

historic Lyric Theater

and or common Lyric Theater

2. Location

street & number 819 N. W. 2nd Avenue

not for publication

city, town Miami vicinity of

city, state Florida 33136 code FL county Dade code FL 029

3. Classification

Category

Ownership

Public

Private

both

Status

Occupied

unoccupied

work in progress

Accessible

in process

being considered

Present Use

agriculture

commercial

educational

entertainment

government

industrial

military

museum

park

private residence

religious

scientific

transportation

other:

4. Owner of Property

name United House of Prayer, c/o Bishop W. McCallough

street & number 1665 N. Portal Drive, N.W.

city, town Washington vicinity of state D.C. 20012

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dade County Courthouse

street & number 75 W. Flagler Street

city, town Miami state Florida 33130

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Title FMSG Miami Multiple Resource Historic Preservation Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date June, 1985

defedory for survey records Bureau of Historic Preservation

city, town Tallahassee state Florida 32399-0250
7. Description

<table>
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<th>Condition</th>
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<tr>
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<td>X deteriorated</td>
<td>__ unaltered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__ good</td>
<td>__ ruined</td>
<td>X altered</td>
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<tr>
<td>__ fair</td>
<td>__ unexposed</td>
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET
DESCRIPTION:

Condition: Deteriorated

The Lyric Theater is a two-story masonry structure constructed prior to 1914.1 Fronting to the west, the building features physical characteristics of the Masonry Vernacular style of architecture. The Lyric Theater is constructed of concrete block, and its exterior is sheathed in stucco. The building's principal elevation is divided into five bays and is topped by an arched parapet. A flat roof, with a series of monitors, is delineated by the parapet wall.

The facade of the Lyric Theater displays a symmetrical, three-part composition that is embellished with applied classically-styled details. The most outstanding architectural components of the building's facade are its elaborate end bays and arched parapet. Each end bay features a two-story arched recess flanked by colossal fluted pilasters capped by Corinthian capitals. Each recess contains two windows, one situated at the level of each story. The upper windows rest on a decorative masonry console and are surmounted by a fanlight.

The parapet across the facade of the Lyric Theater is arched over the center three bays and is topped by an elaborate masonry coping. A large projecting cartouche decorates the center of the parapet. It is apparent from physical evidence and an old photograph that there was a central recessed entrance echoing the arch of the parapet.2 The western portion of the second story was added at a later time. The exterior of the first floor has been somewhat altered, but it still retains the original configuration of a recessed entrance in the center three bays. All of the original doors have been replaced, and likewise, no original windows remain. The existing windows are a combination of aluminum awning and jalousie types, typical replacements in South Florida, due to climatic conditions.
When completed, the interior of the Lyric Theater featured an "elevated stage, a good viewing screen, regular theatre seats with individual cushions, and nice rest rooms." Only recently accessible, the majority of interior detailing is intact. Detailing includes the stage, balcony, portions of the original seating, interior stairwells leading to the balcony area, arcaded openings and paired twisted columns with corinthian capitals.

Despite the physical deterioration of the building, the Lyric Theater still retains a high degree of architectural and structural integrity. The most significant stylistic features of its principal elevation have been preserved, and its original architectural design intent is very much in evidence.
### 8. Significance

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</th>
<th>Specific dates</th>
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**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

See continuation sheet.
The Lyric Theater is significant on the local level as a reflection of entertainment and social life in Overtown, originally known as "Colored Town," during the early twentieth century. It is significant on the state level as a theater in the State of Florida owned and operated by Blacks, using all Black entertainers. Even more outstanding was its popularity among the White population of the area. The building is architecturally significant because it constitutes an excellent example of the Masonry Vernacular style as applied to buildings in Overtown.

The Lyric Theater exemplifies an era in the history of Overtown that was characterized by flourishing entertainment. The Lyric Theater is located on N. W. 2nd Avenue, a street known as "Little Broadway" during the 1930s and 1940s because the large number of clubs located there presented such stars as Marion Anderson, Bessie Smith, Hazel Scott, and Nat "King" Cole. None of the other theater buildings located along "Little Broadway" remain. Lyric Theater thus serves as a surviving testament to this important period of Overtown's history.

Shortly after its completion, the Lyric Theater was described as "possibly the most beautiful and costly playhouse owned by colored people in all the Southland." It was built for Cedar Walker, a wealthy black businessman who was "rated among the most substantial citizens of the county." It featured black theatrical troupes as they traveled across the country. The building also served the Overtown community in other ways, including its use for political meetings, concerts, dramas, boxing, rallies, beauty pageants, and club activities. The Lyric Theater constitutes an excellent example of Masonry Vernacular architecture and is one of the more elaborate buildings remaining in Overtown. Because of widespread demolition, few buildings with any degree of architectural significance remain in Overtown. Only the four churches, the J & S Building, and the Lyric Theater exhibit elements of
architectural styling. As such, the Lyric Theater is architecturally significant within the context of its neighborhood. The Lyric Theater, once considered to be the most beautiful building in Overtown, is particularly noteworthy for its application of classical detailing and applied decorative ornament.  

The 1987 Florida Legislature has recently appropriated $150,000 for the rehabilitation of this historic building. Plans for the theater's adaptive use will be developed in 1988. The architect of the building has not been identified. In the very recent past, the Lyric Theater has been purchased by the Black Archives to be restored and used in as close to its original use as possible. (This change of ownership is not reflected in the nomination form as tax records have yet to be updated.)

NOTES
2. Photograph found at the Black Archives, History and Research Foundation of South Florida, Inc., no date.
6. "Colored Town Section of the City of Miami is a Thriving Community," Miami Metropolis, 16 October 1915, p. 46.
7. See note 6 above.
9. See note 5 above.
10. See note 5 above.
9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see Bibliography for Cover Nomination

10. Geographical Data

Accrual of nominated property: Less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name: Miami

Quadrangle scale: 1:24000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Miami, Lot 29 and the northerly 15 feet of Lot 36 of the plat of P. W. WHITE'S
RE-SUBDIVISION OF BLOCK 36 NORTH (PB B-34)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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<th>state</th>
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<th>county</th>
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Sarah Eaton / Vicki L. Welcher, Historic Sites Specialist

organization: Bureau of Historic Preservation
date: October, 1988

street & number: 500 South Bronough Street
telephone: (904) 487-2333

city or town: Tallahassee
state: Florida

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national: X, state: local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-655), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature:

title: State Historic Preservation Officer
date:

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.
date:

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:
date:

Chief of Registration
LYRIC THEATER
819 N.W. 2 AVENUE

location

site plan