

NR listed 1-4-89

DA 2397

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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)

For NPS use only

received

date entered

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street & number 819 N. W. 2nd Avenue not for publication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

state Florida 33136 code FL county Dade code FL 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

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

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 FMSF-Miami Multiple Resource
Historic Preservation Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date June, 1985 federal state county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Historic Preservation

city, town Tallahassee state Florida 32399-0250

7. Description

Condition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	Check one	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	
<input type="checkbox"/> fair			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

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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 is south Florida, due to climatic conditions.

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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."3 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.

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8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1938	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c. 1914 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Specific Date: Circa 1914

Architect: Unknown

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.⁴ 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.⁵

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."⁶ The Lyric Theater was built for Gedar Walker, a wealthy black businessman who was "rated among the most substantial citizens of the county."⁷ 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.⁸ The Lyric Theater constitutes an excellent example of Masonry Vernacular architecture and is one of the more elaborate buildings remaining in Overtown.⁹ 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

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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.¹⁰

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

1. Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of Miami, Dade County Florida (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1914).
2. Photograph found at the Black Archives, History and Research Foundation of South Florida, Inc., no date.
3. Dorothy Fields, "Black Entertainment 1908-1919," Update, December 1974, p. 11.
4. Paul S. George, "Colored Town: Miami Black Community, 1896-1930," Florida Historical Quarterly, April 1978, p. 440.
5. Sarah E. Eaton, "Lyric Theater Designation Report" (prepared for the City of Miami Heritage Conservation Board, 6 January 1984).
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.
8. "Looking Back on Black Miami," Miami Times, 15 May 1975.
9. See note 5 above.
10. See note 5 above.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see Bibliography for Cover Nomination

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Miami

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	7	5	8	10	4	1	10	2	18	5	1	6	12	10
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H

Zone				Easting				Northing						

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code

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 32399-0250

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), 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 *George W. Welcher*

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 _____

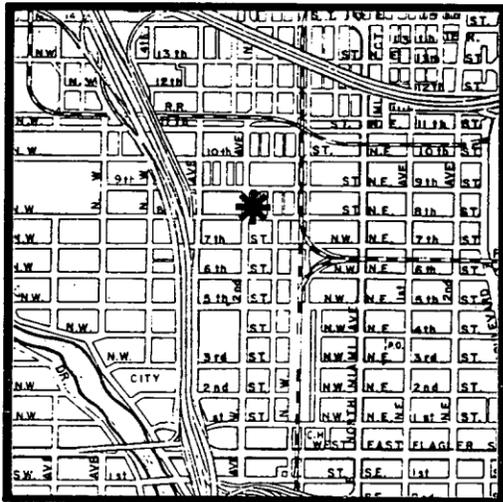
Chief of Registration

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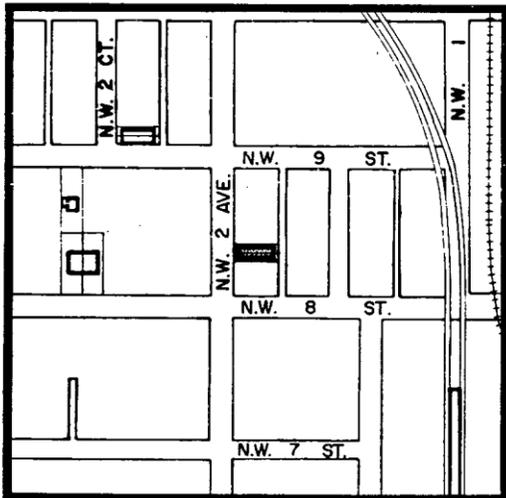


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LYRIC THEATER
819 N.W. 2 AVENUE



location



site plan

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