

*Washington*

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

For HCRS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Madison Theatre

and/or common Madison Theatre

**2. Location**

street & number 502 Main Street \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Peoria \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district 18th

state Illinois code 012 county Peoria code 143

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name (Building) Plitt Theaters, Inc. (Land) Conigisky Real Estate

street & number 175 N. State Street 311 Fayette Street, Apt. A

city, town Chicago, Ill. \_\_\_ vicinity of Peoria state Illinois

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Peoria County Courthouse, Room 11, Recorder's Office

street & number 324 Main

city, town Peoria state Illinois

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Illinois Historic Structure has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no  
Survey

date October, 1974 \_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records 405 E. Washington Street

city, town Springfield state Illinois

## 7. Description

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

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Madison Theatre Building is situated on the northeast corner of Main and Madison Streets in the Central Business District of Peoria and is approximately 80' wide on Main Street and approximately 145' deep along Madison Street.

The building is two floors in height along the Main Street elevation and three floors in height along part of the Madison Street elevation. The plan is reversed "L" shape with the quarter block filled in by retail shops fronting on Main Street.

On the main floor the building consists of an outer lobby with a ticket booth and marquee on Main Street, an inner lobby, and then a large foyer just outside the auditorium. The auditorium seats 874 persons on the main floor and 870 in the two stepped balconies or what is called the main balcony and upper balcony. A stage and proscenium (approx. 40' wide by 30' high) are at the opposite end of the auditorium. The auditorium has a raked floor of terrazzo.

An orchestra pit is just in front of the stage. Under the stage is a lower level containing six dressing rooms, an instrument room, musicians room, and an organist room which at one time contained organ blowers and other equipment. Two lavatory areas are also found at each end of the lower level adjacent to the stairways leading to the stage wings. The fly area above the stage is high enough to fly scenery and other stage material. A light board, trap door, and catwalk are also found in the stage area.

Twin stairs leading from the foyer take patrons to the main balcony foyer and another pair of stairs ascend to the upper balcony vomitories.

The ceiling of the first floor foyer is open to the foyer outside the main balcony by use of an oval colonnaded loggia that allows people to see and be seen from one floor to the other.

On the third floor under the upper balcony are found former offices and screening rooms, as well as a private lavatory. The projection room is at the rear of the upper balcony.

The basement under the first floor foyer contains a men's lavatory and former men's lounge as well as mechanical equipment rooms. There are no basement areas under the inner or outer lobbies or under the auditorium.

The building is constructed of brick bearing walls varying from 12" to 16" to 24" in thickness. Steel trusses span the width of the auditorium and bear on the masonry walls. Precast concrete slabs span between steel channel purlins which are secured to the top chords of the trusses. All the plaster ceilings, domes, and cornices are suspended from the steel trusses.

There are three plaster domes. One oval dome over the second floor foyer and (due to the open loggia) is visible from the first floor foyer also. Two domes one oval and one circular, are over the auditorium. The oval dome is above the orchestra seats and the circular dome is over the main balcony seating area. At one time a chandelier hung from the center of the circular dome.

On the first floor, adjacent to and accessible from the inner lobby, is the women's lavatory on one side and the concession counter and main office are on the opposite side.

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On the Main Street side of the building is the outer lobby and three shops one shop to the right and two shops to the left. (Photo #1) The shops have the original black tile bulkhead and display window frames but the leaded glass ventilating windows above the display windows have been covered over with inexpensive signage or grilles.

The Outer Lobby and Inner Lobby were remodeled in 1936-37. Furred out from the original sidewalls of the Inner Lobby are indulating panels installed up to a midway point in this room. Decorative downlights accent the curved surfaces. At this midway point a vertical panel was installed as a mounting place for coming attraction notices. This panel has four indirect light coves running vertically from floor to ceiling. The coves are emphasized with stainless steel strips running along the edge of the coves and enhancing the indirect lighting.

Indirect light coves are also along the top edge of the sidewalls with a new flat ceiling coving downward behind the light sources.

The Outer Lobby new finishes are furred out from the existing walls with porcelain enamel panels, smooth and rounded at the corners. Strong colors emphasize display boxes and the front corners suggesting piers supporting the marquee.

While the remodeled Inner Lobby appears to conflict with the Adamesque spaces it precedes, the new interior reflects the change in the movie palace and its patron's tastes. The Art Deco stylings have been tamed by the more streamlined Moderne and perhaps a design to ease the maintenance burden caused by a growing movie-going public. The emphasis has shifted from a handcrafted, highly decorated surface treatment, to one of machine made streamlined surfaces: smooth, curving cubic and cylindrical volumes symbolic of the Automobile Age. The Lobbies as a whole give no hint of the opulently ornamented theater except in the new symbol, (icon), the neoned, running lighted marquee. While the Inner Lobby brings the then current stylings to this building, the kinetically lit marquee serves to signal the public that every show is a grand opening, exciting, and hot out of the cameras. It also reaffirms this theaters place among the local competition in this thriving market.

The exterior facing material for the two street elevations of the building is white glazed brick with a base of black tile about 2' high. The two blind elevations are reddish jumbo brick sometimes found in street paving.

The front elevation on the Main Street side is divided into four bays. The double pilaster dividing the bays stops at the head of the second floor windows, allowing the cornice to present a strong horizontal line across the elevation. The second bay from the corner is about one third wider than the other bays. On the first floor this is the bay that contains the outer lobby and box office of the theater.

Above the second floor windows in this larger bay are found three panels. The side panels are defined with terra cotta borders and revealed brick rectangles. The terra cotta center panel is the largest and gives the name "THE MADISON", in relief. Another panel above the sign panel has garlands of flowers, urns, and ornamental ropes, all in terra cotta

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relief work. The top of the parapet wall is emphasized with brick dentils under a continuous terra cotta cap. The pilasters mentioned earlier have stylized acanthus leaves in the terra cotta pilaster capitals. All the terra cotta work is white glazed, with selected accents of subdued yellow glazed brick.

On the Madison Street elevation, the two floor portion of the building is divided into four equal bays and the three floor portion has three bays with the center bay double the width of the bays on each side. (Photo #3) The center bay follows the Classic style and contains exit doors on the first floor, and iron balcony at the mezzanine level, a group of three windows on the second floor, and a band of small but functional windows at the third floor.

Terra cotta panels with cherubs flanking a circular medallion are found in the side bays. a large half circle arch in glazed brick is the focal point of the central bay. The three windows at the second floor level are arched at the top as well.

The exterior of the building has Classical influences, sparse in detail; the exterior design expresses a very delicate character of its own in the urban setting.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention				

**Specific dates** 1920 **Builder/Architect** Frederic J. Klein, Architect  
Fred Harbers Sons, Builders

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Madison Theatre Building is significant not only as a building that was constructed to satisfy the growing market in motion pictures and vaudeville but as an example of the restrained theater design in an era when movie palaces were being built in such lavish form as Spanish gardens, Moorish palaces, and Chinese pagodas.

This building was built by the Robinson Amusement Company and was designed by Frederic J. Klein, a Peoria architect who did a number of theaters including the Coronado Theatre in Rockford, Illinois. Constructed by Fred Harbers Sons (local contractor) at the cost of \$500,000, the theater opened on Oct. 16, 1920.

The interiors are strong evidence of a fine adaptation of the Bros. Adam school of design and decoration to a theater building. The late English Renaissance interior follows the simpler Classical traditions of the Bros. Adam. The areas not drastically affected by the 1936-37 remodeling still carry the wonderfully done ceilings and walls which have the low Adam relief decorations consisting of lunettes, swags, and paterae. Wedgewood-type figures in circular plaques are found repeatedly in the ceiling and wall plaster work, usually surrounded by a garland circle.

In the second floor foyer, the ceiling corners are handled with the typical Adam decorations of arabesques and fans. The colonnaded loggia (Photo #8) in the second floor foyer with its oval opening into the main floor foyer follows the Bros. Adam stair hall concepts found in Culzean Castle, Ayrshire, Scotland (from a book by Doreen Yarwood entitled Robert Adam). Of course, it is much grander in scale in Culzean Castle. Also, simple Tuscan columns were used in the Colonnade, but the loggia railing is again typical Adam with cast metal balusters and wood handrail.

The dome of the auditorium is perhaps the culmination of Frederic Klein's Adam-inspired designs. The dome consists of concentric circles, each one smaller and more detailed in its plaster relief work. The dome is surrounded by a coved cornice that conceals lights that play on the dome. The outer-most circle in the dome has 21 sculptured plaques, each plaque having a different human, bird, or animal figure in relief. Next, a series of garlands link all these together and tie them to a second circle of deeply set rosettes. The next circle is set off with a small circular molding out of which 21 fans are mounted. Another circle with small medallions and continuous garlands culminates in the center rosette from which hung a chandelier at an earlier time. (Photo #11 and #13)

The balcony front is a continuous design of alternating panels with wedgewood-type figures and arabesques with a central winged maiden.

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The ground floor of the auditorium has a high wainscot of plaster work made to simulate large slabs of stone. Above this is a continuous pattern of bays which at one time were believed to have been mirrored but are now covered. In the balcony the bay system is emphasized with plaster pilasters continuous back to the line of the upper balcony. In the bays between pilasters again are low Adam relief of garlands, medallions, and figures.

The proscenium is surrounded with a heavy motif of acanthus leaves with an edge of beaded plaster molding. Above the proscenium is a row of tablets with dancing figures. (Photo #12) The oval sculptured plaque over the center of the proscenium has the flowing-gowned figure of a girl which is repeated throughout the theater in light fixtures, medallions, and ceiling plaster work. (Photo #9)

Under the balcony are two circular and one oval stained glass panels with lights recessed above them, thus again repeating the circular designs found elsewhere in the building. (Photo #11)

The outer lobby and inner lobby are the only two areas covered over with Art Deco decorations in the 1936-37 remodeling. The walls and ceilings were furred out and covered with new wood or plaster surfaces but the terrazzo floors remain intact. The foyers, staircases, main and upper balconies, and auditorium are all almost as they were in 1927. In general, the Madison Theatre interior expresses a quiet elegance rather than a florid style. The relief work was originally high-lighted with gold leaf but this has been painted over with gold paint. In fact, the coloring used by the owner also follows the Adam concepts of white, soft gold, and cream in the painting of the plaster.

The changes made between the opening in 1920 and the alterations of 1927 are principally the installation of an organ and the lowering of the orchestra platform into a pit in front of the stage. The stage originally curved back away from the seats and this was changed in 1927 to pull the front of the stage out to the proscenium line. At the same time, the ornamental side boxes had a grille installed behind them to allow the sound from newly built organ chambers to be heard throughout the auditorium.

Many movie stars and famous vaudeville personages came to the Madison through the years. One of the most remembered is the premiere showing of Earthworm Tractors starring comedian Joe E. Brown. Joe E. Brown and principal actors in the cast of the show visited the Madison opening night.

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Frederick J. Klein, Architect (Additional Information)

Frederick J. Klein, architect of the Madison Theater, was born in Detroit, Michigan, on June 11, 1874. His family moved to Peoria shortly after 1874 and Fred Klein resided in Peoria the rest of his life.

His career in architecture began when he was about 25 years old, when he was employed by the architectural firm of Reeves and Baillee as a draftsman. This Peoria firm was the architect for the Peoria City Hall and Spaulding High School. In about two years, Fred Klein was taken on by Herbert Hewitt, a Peoria architect later to be part of the firm of Hewitt and Emerson, architects for such buildings as the Pere Marquette Hotel, Peoria Life Insurance Building, and many others.

With no formal education, Fred Klein developed his own knowledge of architecture with continual reading of architectural books. He later lamented that the students who worked for him did not read enough on their profession. Many of his designs indicate a preference for Classical style buildings. For example, the Peoria High School on North Street has four three story high limestone columns. With doric capitals, the columns set off a porch that recesses into the building and contains the main entrance and lobby. Washington Grade School, a smaller building, has six limestone columns across the front, two floors in height. A strong pediment over the main entrance is located in the center of the front facade. The McDowell Apartments, four floors in height, have classical columns flanking the front porches on each side which rise the full height of the building.

Classical facades are to be found on his Pavilion for South Park, the First National Bank Building on Adams Street, the Peoria County Jail, and many other of his buildings.

Frederick Klein's design of the Madison Theater seems to follow one expression of the Classical Revival of the very early 1900's; that is, following the Adams Brothers designs in his development of the Classical Style. Some architects on the East Coast in the early 1900's were known also to develop their Classical Revival style with Adams inspired designs.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Sunday Journal Transcript, October 17, 1920, Special Madison Theatre Section

Journal Transcript, October 13, 1920.

Peoria Three, Architectural/Historical Survey Committee, Peoria Section, Central Illinois Chapter, American Institute of Architects, April 1980

## 10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Peoria East Quad 1:24000

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

### UMT References

A 

1	6	2	8	1	0	3	0	4	5	0	7	8	2	0
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

The boundaries of the Madison Theatre Building are as shown on the accompanying map on the following page.

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

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Leslie H. Kenyon, Architect

organization Kenyon and Associates, Architects date April 21, 1980

street & number 735 N. Knoxville Avenue telephone (309) 674-7121

city or town Peoria state Illinois 61602

## 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title District date 9/25/80

For HCRS 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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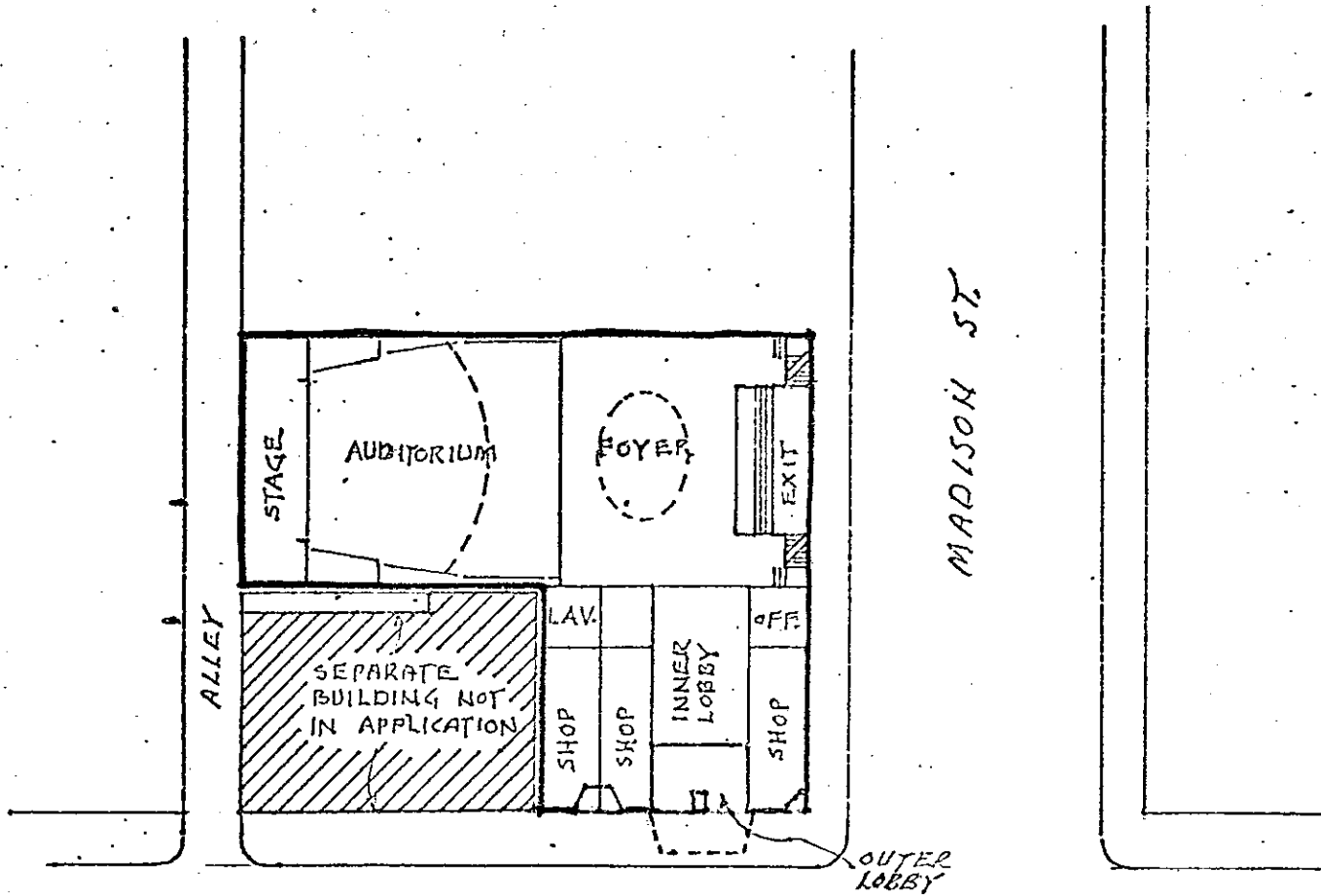
DATE ENTERED

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MADISON THEATER BUILDING  
SCHEMATIC PLAN SCALE 1 INCH EQUALS 50 FEET

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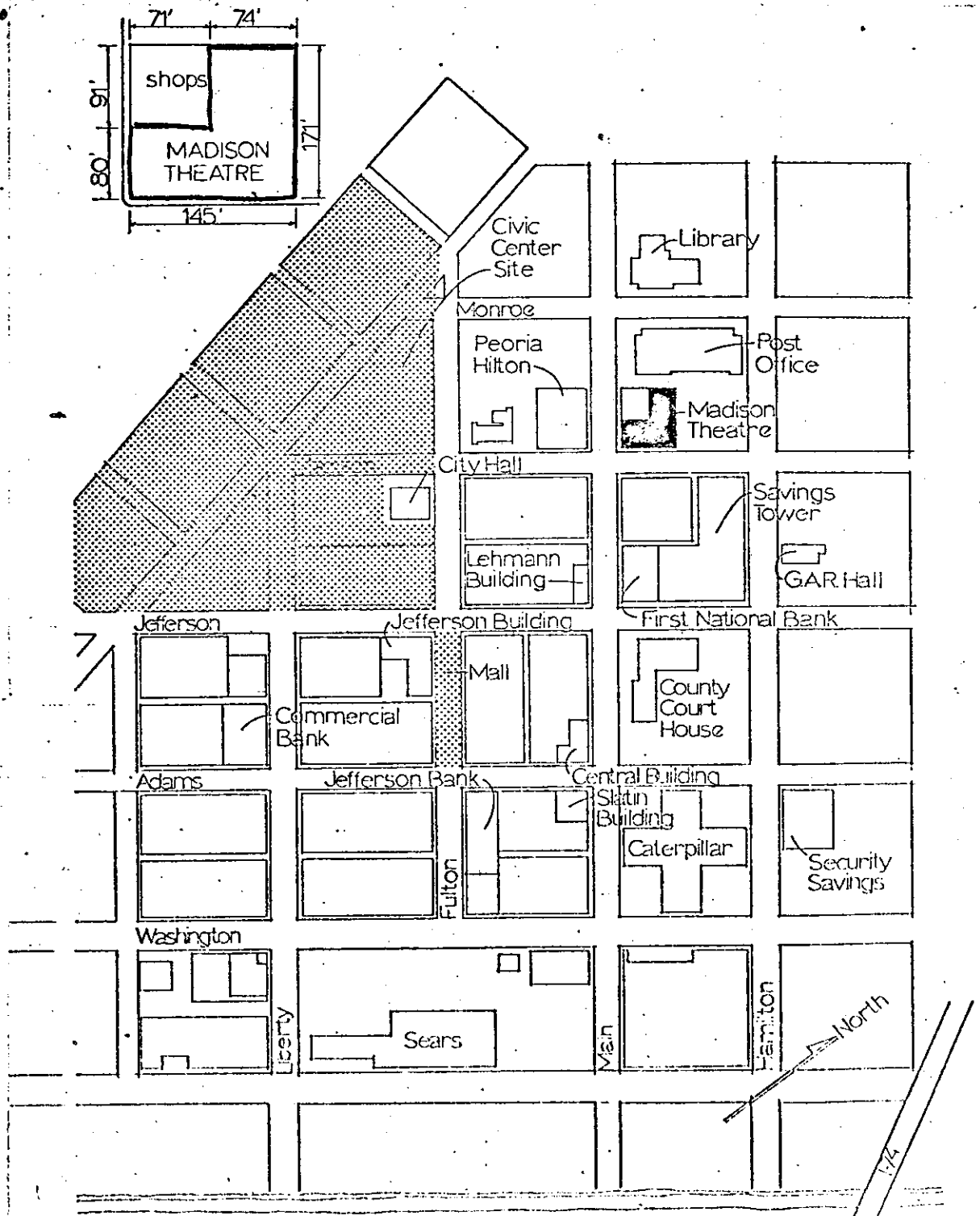
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ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE ILLINOIS

Date Entered NOV 21 1990

Name

Location

Madison Theatre

Peoria  
Peoria County

Ardmore Avenue Train Station

Villa Park  
DuPage County

Dunlap Mansion

Chicago  
Cook County

Sheridan Plaza Hotel

Chicago  
Cook County

Also Notified

Honorable Charles H. Percy  
Honorable Adlai E. Stevenson  
Honorable Robert H. Michel  
Honorable John N. Erlenborn  
Honorable Sidney R. Yates

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For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.