

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

Historic name Broadway Theatre

Other names/site number New Broadway Theatre, Fox Broadway, Kerasotes Broadway Theatre

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

Street & number 805 Broadway

N/A

not for publication

City or town Cape Girardeau

N/A

vicinity

State Missouri Code MO County Cape Girardeau Code 031 Zip code 63701

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Toni M. Prawl

04/22/15

Signature of certifying official/Title Toni M. Prawl, Ph.D., Deputy SHPO

Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. 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 the Keeper

Date of Action

Broadway Theatre
Name of Property

Cape Girardeau County, Missouri
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Recreation and Culture/Theatre

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: two-part commercial block

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

roof: Asphalt; Metal/Steel

other: Glass

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES

Broadway Theatre
Name of Property

Cape Girardeau County, Missouri
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1921-1960

Significant Dates

1921

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Southeast Missouri State University HP Program

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

Broadway Theatre
Name of Property

Cape Girardeau County, Missouri
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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 0.3 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 37.306688 -89.528497 3 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 _____ 4 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

_____ NAD 1927 or _____ NAD 1983

1 _____ 3 _____
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

2 _____ 4 _____
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (On continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (On continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Alyssa Lage and Steven Hoffman, Ph.D.
organization Southeast Missouri State University HP Program date Aug. 27, 2014; rev. April 6, 2015
street & number Dept. of History, MS2960, One University Plaza telephone (573) 651-2808
city or town Cape Girardeau state MO zip code 63701
e-mail shoffman@semo.edu

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:**
 - A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
 - A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Broadway Theatre

Name of Property

Cape Girardeau County, Missouri

County and State

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Broadway Theatre**

City or Vicinity: **Cape Girardeau**

County: **Cape Girardeau** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Steven J. Hoffman**

Date: **October 6, 2013 (Photo 3); October 10, 2013 (Photos 1, 2, 7, 13); December 19, 2013 (Photos 4, 5, 10); July 10, 2012 (Photos 8, 9); July 28, 2014 (Photos 8, 9)**

Photographed: **Photos checked for accuracy by photographer, March 27, 2015**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 13: North façade, facing south.
- 2 of 13: North façade and east elevation, facing southwest.
- 3 of 13: East elevation and south elevation (rear), facing west/northwest.
- 4 of 13: Lobby interior, facing north.
- 5 of 13: Lobby interior, facing east.
- 6 of 13: Detail of lobby cornice trim above drop ceiling tiles, facing southwest.
- 7 of 13: Interior of auditorium, facing southwest.
- 8 of 13: Interior of auditorium, facing west.
- 9 of 13: Interior of auditorium, facing north.
- 10 of 13: Detail of proscenium arch, facing south.
- 11 of 13: Detail of auditorium trim, facing west.
- 12 of 13: Detail of auditorium cornice trim beneath balcony, facing west.
- 13 of 13: Detail of Art Deco bronze and glass ribbed light shade, facing east.

Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

Figure 1: Site map.

Figure 2: Broadway Theatre, postcard view, circa 1920s.

Figure 3: Remodeled Broadway Theatre reopened February 20, 1970.

Figure 4: View from the stage of a packed house at the Broadway Theatre, circa 1920s.

Figure 5: Peg Meyer and the Original Melody Kings on the stage of the Broadway Theatre, 1924.

Figure 6: The Missourian's thirteenth annual Cooking Show, February 20, 1939.

Broadway Theatre

Name of Property

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Figure 7: Floor Plan (prepared by Steven Hoffman, August 2014).

Figure 8: Photo Key (prepared by Steven Hoffman, August 2014).

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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Broadway Theatre
Name of Property
Cape Girardeau County, Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Summary

The Broadway Theatre, 805 Broadway, Cape Girardeau, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri, is a two story, red brick rectangular commercial structure with a white, glazed brick façade constructed in 1921. Located in a traditional, downtown commercial district, the Broadway Theatre served the community as a vaudeville and movie house from its construction until 1960 when it closed its doors for the first time. The building is a good example of the two-part commercial block architectural form described by Richard Longstreth in *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. It has two distinct zones: the theatre/storefront zone on the first level (see Figure 8) and a second zone with office space on the second level.¹ The building is divided into three bays, with the main theatre entrance in the central bay. Although altered slightly over the last 90 years, the Broadway Theatre still conveys the look and feel of an early-twentieth century theatre.

Broadway Theatre Site Description

Setting

The Broadway Theatre is located on Broadway, which is one of the main commercial thoroughfares in the downtown Cape Girardeau commercial district (see Figure 1). The façade of the Broadway Theatre faces Broadway to the north; to the east is a vacant lot that was formerly the site of the telephone exchange building at the southwest corner of Broadway and Ellis Street.² The southern boundary of the theatre abuts an east-to-west alley. The western elevation is attached to the commercial building next door (811 Broadway).

In the block where the Broadway Theatre is located there is a bar/small entertainment venue, clothing store, sporting goods store, sports bar and a small hair salon. The neighboring blocks along Broadway are commercial and contain a variety of businesses, including a pharmacy, fast food restaurant, jewelry/pawn shop, resale store, automobile repair shop and a chain general store. This portion of Broadway is very close to Southeast Missouri State University's Alumni Center and the football stadium. It is also located within several blocks of two large and relatively new student dormitories. Located north and south of Broadway are residential neighborhoods including single family and multiple family homes.

¹ Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* (Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1987); Thomason and Associates, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Cape Girardeau, Missouri*, National Register (Washington, D.C. : National Park Service, 2000).

² *Cape Girardeau, Missouri* [map]. 1923. Scale not given. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Cape Girardeau May 1923 #2". MU Ellis Library Special Collections Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Collection.

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Broadway Theatre
Name of Property
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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The commercial district in which the Broadway Theatre resides is located in a part of Cape Girardeau's business district that was strong and thriving at the time the theatre was built in 1921 and through the golden age of film. However, the original business district began to decline when businesses started moving westward, first into the shopping centers along Kingshighway in the 1950s and 1960s, and then to the shopping mall and big box retail centers adjacent to the interstate in the 1970s and after. Inexpensive land and changing shopping and residential patterns attracted developers outside of the city center. The shift made travelling downtown inconvenient for those living outside of the city's downtown and led to a period of general decline in the district. Currently, the area of Broadway where the theatre is located is experiencing a renaissance due to the installation of a new streetscape in 2013 and the revitalization effort led by Cape Girardeau's Main Street organization and the City of Cape Girardeau.

Exterior Description

The building sits on a zero-lot line and the cement sidewalk meets the northern edge of the building facing Broadway. The side and rear walls are red brick. The eastern elevation has three types of brick bonds. Where the Broadway Theatre formerly abutted a building that is no longer extant the brick is laid in a 6:1 common bond. The exterior wall where the brick was originally exposed has a 6:1 common bond with a Flemish header. The second story of the eastern elevation is laid in a running bond. The northern elevation is white glazed brick laid in a running bond.

The northern elevation, or façade, is symmetrical and is divided into three bays by two brick pilasters on each side of the main entrance to the theatre. White, glazed brick pilasters flank both the eastern and western edge of the northern façade framing the building. All four pilasters run the full height of the building, are white glazed brick and originally had decorative finials at the top of the parapet wall (See Figure 2). The center bay has a recessed entry with three sets of replacement aluminum double doors with large glass fixed transoms installed in the 1970s. The shell of an aluminum marquee sign installed in 1970 is located above the transom (See Photograph 1).

Storefronts are located on both sides of the main bay. Each storefront originally had a recessed glass doorway abutting the theatre entrance and a large glass display window with three transom lights above (see Figure 2). The eastern (left) storefront is boarded up with only two large rectangular glass transom lights exposed. The western (right) storefront retains its historic configuration although the materials appear to have been replaced; the door is a modern, metal framed glass door, the large storefront windows have been replaced with single light aluminum framed glass windows and the transom has been covered with plywood and aluminum sheeting (compare Figure 2 and Photograph 1).

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The center bay originally had a stepped pediment that projected above the flat roof of the center bay and mimicked the profile of the auditorium's roofline (see Figure 2). The decorative finials atop the glazed brick pilasters and the stepped pediment were removed when the façade was covered with an aluminum slipcover in the 1970 renovation (see Figure 3). The aluminum slipcover was removed circa 2008, exposing the historic façade.

There are eight windows on the second level; two windows in each storefront bay and four in the central bay. The original windows were four-over-one wood sash windows with concrete sills. The windows were replaced with non-historic one-over-one aluminum sash windows. The individual windows do not have lintels; instead, a vertically laid, white glazed soldier course extends the width of the façade above the second-level windows. The four glazed brick pilasters interrupt the continuous lintel. Above the vertical brick lintel is a tan stamped terracotta frieze with ornamental bezants. The frieze is interrupted by the four pilasters but extends the width of the façade, providing visual interest and a strong horizontal line. This terracotta frieze is an important character-defining feature of the upper façade revealed in the 2008 removal of the aluminum slipcover. A terra cotta cap runs along the top of the parapet walls.

On the eastern (left) elevation (see Photograph 2) there is a ghost outline of the commercial building which housed the telephone exchange company that is no longer extant (see Photographs 2 and 3). Where the telephone exchange formerly abutted the Broadway Theatre, the mortar is messy, clearly indicating its original function as a party wall. The telephone exchange building did not extend the full length of the Broadway Theatre and an open lot was located behind. This portion of the Broadway Theatre did not have a firewall and had an exit door with a double rowlock segmental arch than has since been bricked closed. About two feet of the theatre's concrete foundation is visible on the eastern façade.

The southern (rear) elevation of the theatre is red brick and approximately four feet of the water table concrete foundation is visible (see Photograph 3). A non-historic metal door is located on the east side leading to the back of the stage in the theatre. Immediately to the west (left) of the rear door is a set of historic wood cargo doors used for unloading stage equipment, scenery and other large items. The western elevation of the theatre is not visible as there is a commercial structure adjoining the theatre on the western side.

The theatre has a flat roof over the lobby portion of the building (see Photograph 2). The auditorium section has a barrel shaped roof, higher over the balcony area and slightly lower over the main auditorium (see Photograph 3). The different levels of the auditorium roof are reflected in different ceiling heights over the balcony (two-story) and main auditorium (see Figure 4). On the exterior, the front of the barrel shaped roof is

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Broadway Theatre
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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

hidden behind a raised red brick stepped parapet that mimicked the shape of the original stepped pediment over the center bay of the façade (see Photograph 2 and Figure 2). The rear of the building, above the stage, has an elevated, three-story section with a flat roof that accommodated theatrical rigging equipment, such as the fly system of ropes and pulleys, catwalk, curtains and other stage equipment (see Photograph 3).

Broadway Theatre Interior Architectural Description

The main entrance doors open into the lobby, which is the width of the center bay (see Photographs 4 and 5; and Figure 7). Although concealed by the 1970s drop ceiling, the lobby's original ceiling details are largely intact and could easily be revealed. The original ceiling was painted a dusty rose color and in the center of the lobby ceiling there is a square that is painted blue-grey and framed by gold crown molding. The lobby has gold crown molding with an egg and dart pattern and patera pattern sculptural ornaments are visible through a hole in the drop ceiling (see Photograph 6).

The lobby floor was replaced with laminate and the entrance and floor in the foyer leading into the theatre was replaced in the 1970 remodel with red patterned carpet. The walls in the foyer are covered with non-historic wallpaper and non-historic light fixtures. Entrances lead from the foyer into the theatre: one on the left (east) and one on the right (west). The original ticket booth, built out from the wall separating the lobby from the auditorium, is no longer extant. There are also two staircases, one on the left (east) and one on the right (west), that lead to the upstairs balcony, the original restrooms, and offices on the second floor. The stairs have been recovered with red carpet. Rooms to the left (east) and right (west) of the lobby are associated with the areas formerly configured as separate storefronts but which are now connected to the theatre lobby.

The theatre auditorium is large and more ornate than the relatively plain commercial structure's exterior would suggest (see Figure 4). The plaster walls have been both repainted and recovered since the theatre's opening, but some of the paint is peeling, revealing the original wall decoration. The original colors were a blue green and brown, with gilded color between, painted in a thick stripe. Portions of the east wall have suffered water damage and some of the plaster is failing (see Photograph 9). The theatre auditorium boasts tall, thick, evenly spaced plastered brick pilasters reaching up to the curved ceiling (see Photograph 8 and Figure 4). The pilasters are square and plain with Doric capitals supporting a cornice currently painted black, but which was originally white and gold. There are also remnants of stepped molding on the pilasters that used to run along the walls (seen in Figure 4). Each pilaster in the theatre has an Art Deco bronze and glass ribbed light shade; shorter ones along the wall under the balcony, and longer ones in the main auditorium space (see Photographs 8 and 13).

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The auditorium has a vaulted ceiling with plaster bands or straps arching across the ceiling connecting the tops of the pilasters. Three large rosettes are located in each section of the ceiling between the bands. Chandeliers formerly hung from the rosettes on each side, while the center rosettes were primarily decorative (See Figure 4). Although the ceiling is currently painted black, the bands and rosettes appear to be mostly intact (see Photographs 8 and 9). Running parallel to the floor on both side walls is an elaborate dado or plaster molding comprised, from top to bottom, of egg-and-dart and patera detailing on the cornice, a diaper pattern of grooves reminiscent of triglyphs with metope rosette medallion accents on the frieze, and guilloche ornament on the architrave (see Photographs 11 and 12). Red cloth stapled to the wall covers the upper portion of the side walls, including the portions on either side of the stage, and presumably covers the decorative panels with swags evident in Figure 4.

The seats of the theatre are centered and rest on white linoleum flooring. The theatre seats are non-historic replacement movie theatre seats with modern refreshment holders (see Photograph 9). There is a center aisle running the length of the theatre and two side aisles on both the east and west. The rear wall is covered in the same non-historic wallpaper as the entrance foyer.

An elaborate proscenium frames the stage (see Photographs 7 and 8). The proscenium is decorated with four different molding patterns: egg & dart, fluted, decorative leaf and floral (featuring a Tudor rose as the flower) and a form of linear coin molding. The proscenium molding is painted white and is approximately twenty-four feet in height and thirty-eight feet wide (see Photographs 7 and 10). The theatre stage is about 24 x 59 feet and is raised above the audience level. The fly space above the stage is concealed behind the proscenium. The offstage area is located behind the movie screen and contains various pieces of theatre equipment. The catwalk, pulleys, ropes, curtains and other equipment are still in the offstage area of the theatre. A stepped apron extends beyond the proscenium. The rear (south) theatre entrance, the cargo door leading into the alleyway, and basement access is located in the offstage area. The basement is where the dressing rooms and music room are located.

The balcony is accessed from stairs leading up from either side of the main lobby. The east stairs lead up to the balcony and to a landing where there is also a small hall to the original men's restroom. The curved balcony extends over the lower seating area. The balcony is concrete with visible concrete brackets supported by two columns and has a metal railing. The ceiling is covered with 1970s era ceiling tiles, and has been stripped of its seats. The projection room is located at the center of the top of the balcony area (north). The west entrance/exit of the balcony leads to the women's restroom and the landing to the second story offices or the stairs leading back down to the foyer and the theatre lobby.

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N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The office space is located in the north/street front end of the building on the second level. The office spaces have tall ceilings, crown molding and hardwood floors. There is a reception area that leads into the first three rooms along the front of the building. There is also a hallway off of the three main rooms that leads to another portion of the second floor where there are additional rooms. These rooms are configured like a small apartment. All the rooms in this portion of the building are in various states of renovation. The easternmost room of this level has exposed brickwork visible through the deteriorating plaster walls.

The basement of the theatre is a maze of concrete walls and various sized rooms. There are mechanical rooms, open rooms, dressing rooms, and a music room. According to the Sanborn maps, the basement of the theatre at one time housed a billiard hall.³ The floors and load bearing walls were constructed of concrete. There is an office located downstairs, presumably for a building maintenance manager. The dressing rooms are located in the area directly beneath the stage. Some of the dressing rooms have plumbing fixtures, one of which designates the room as a male dressing room with the presence of a urinal. The music room has wooden cabinets with slots for sheet music and some paper labels are still visible with categories of music. There is a small entryway from the music room up to the stage where a runner could have delivered music quickly to the piano or organ player during a show. There is an additional basement exit beneath the front of the auditorium space. The stairs lead up to the foyer before the theatre entrance and are underneath the stairs leading up the east side of the hallway to the balcony.

Although the theatre has been remodeled since its construction in 1921, the interior of the theatre retains its original configuration of the lobby, foyer, auditorium, stage, restrooms on the second level, and basement. The defining characteristics of the theatre auditorium—such as the proscenium, pilasters, stage and second story offices—remain intact and ably convey its historic significance as an early-twentieth century theatre. The exterior details, with the exception of the marquee, stepped pediment and finials, are largely as they were during the theatre's historic period. As a result, the Broadway Theatre retains integrity and is able to convey successfully its significance as a small community theatre.

³ *Cape Girardeau, Missouri* [map]. 1923. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Cape Girardeau May 1923 #2".

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Broadway Theatre
Name of Property
Cape Girardeau County, Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Summary

The Broadway Theatre, 805 Broadway, in Cape Girardeau, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri has local significance under Criterion A in the area of ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION. The Broadway Theatre is individually eligible under Criterion A as an essential source of entertainment and recreation in Cape Girardeau and the entire Southeast Missouri district. The period of significance extends from its construction in 1921 until 1960 when the theatre closed its doors as a theatre for the first time. The Broadway Theatre is significant between its built date and its closing date because it was the largest theatre, serving Cape Girardeau and the Southeast Missouri region and later remained significant because it featured a variety of entertainment both stage and film. The Broadway Theatre, a two-part commercial block building, is the oldest of only two surviving historic theatres remaining in Cape Girardeau, and the only surviving one from the silent film/vaudeville show era with a documented regional draw. Although it has experienced minor alterations, it successfully conveys its significance as an early-twentieth century community theatre in Southeast Missouri.

Elaboration

The Theatres of Cape Girardeau

Throughout its period of significance, the Broadway Theatre was one of the most prominent entertainment venues in Cape Girardeau. When the Broadway Theatre opened in 1921, it completely outclassed the competition. The Orpheum Theatre, built on Good Hope Street in 1915, also presented vaudeville acts and showed movies, but it only had 669 seats (as compared to Broadway Theatre's 1200 plus).⁴ The Orpheum ended up closing in 1954 and was demolished in 1993.⁵ The Park Theatre, opened on Broadway by the owners of *Southeast Missourian* in 1913, was the first purpose-built theatre in Cape Girardeau.⁶ At that time, the other theatres in town were located in storefronts. When the Broadway Theatre opened in 1921, the Park Theatre closed for several years and then reopened as a second run theatre.⁷ The theatre was purchased by the Salvation Army in 1949 and used as a headquarters until the roof collapsed in 1985. The Park Theatre building was demolished between 1985 and 1989.⁸

⁴ "Southern Missouri movie theatres" (<http://movie-theatre.org/usa/mo/MO%20Missouri%20South.pdf>, accessed October 19, 2013); Matt Sanders, "Moving Pictures," *Southeast Missourian*, February 27, 2005.

⁵ B. Ray Owens, "Saturday Afternoons at the Orpheum," *Southeast Missourian*, February 21, 2002.

⁶ Sanders, "Moving Pictures," *Southeast Missourian*; Cinema Treasures, "Park Theatre," <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/34412> (accessed 12/19/2013).

⁷ Cinema Treasures, "Park Theatre."

⁸ "Year in Review For Cape Girardeau," *Southeast Missourian*, December 31, 1949; "New Church Buildings Added In Girardeau During Decade," *Southeast Missourian*, January 28, 1950; "Salvation Army seeks new building monies," *Bulletin Journal*, January 27, 1985; "Bank to donate building to Salvation Army," *Southeast Missourian*, July 1, 1985; "Downtown structure to be taken down," *Southeast Missourian*,

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Broadway Theatre
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N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The other two theatres to open in downtown Cape Girardeau in the twentieth century were the Rialto Theatre, which opened in 1940, and the Esquire Theatre (NR 9/15/05), which opened in 1947.⁹ Both of these theatres were opened on Broadway, and the Esquire was located almost directly across the street from the Broadway Theatre, reinforcing the notion that Broadway in Cape Girardeau was the center of entertainment for the city and region. Both of these theatres were purpose-built to show movies and, as a result, were unable to challenge the Broadway Theatre as a regional community theatre. The Rialto had only 500 seats and the Esquire 800; and of course neither boasted a full stage for community events; they were strictly movie houses.¹⁰

Despite this competition from the other movie houses along Broadway, the Broadway Theatre was not truly eclipsed as an important entertainment venue until it first closed its doors on October 18, 1960. When the Shirley Theaters Corp. purchased the theatre in 1960, they kept it closed until eventually selling it in 1969 to Kerasotes Theatres of Springfield, Illinois.¹¹ In fact, the Broadway corridor remained the city's primary destination for moviegoers until the opening of the Kerasotes Theatre in a strip mall shopping area known as Town Plaza in 1973.¹² Kerasotes bought the Broadway Theatre in 1970 and continued to operate it until 1984. In addition to opening a new theater in the Town Plaza, Kerasotes also purchased the Rialto in 1971. The Rialto closed in 1983, and the Broadway Theatre shut its doors the following year.¹³ Although the Broadway Theatre opened again in the 1990s as a dollar theater catering to the student population of Southeast Missouri State University, its success was short-lived and it closed its doors for good in 1997.¹⁴ It has remained largely vacant ever since.

Aside from the Broadway Theatre, the only other historic theater remaining in Cape Girardeau is the currently vacant and dilapidated Esquire Theatre (NR 2005). The Rialto's roof collapsed during a rainstorm in 2010 and the auditorium was subsequently

February 5, 1989 (article about building on corner of Broadway and Spanish; Park Theatre building was demolished prior to this).

⁹ Southern Missouri movie theatres; Terri Foley, "Esquire Theatre National Register of Historic Places, Cape Girardeau County," listed September 15, 2005.

¹⁰ Southern Missouri movie theatres.

¹¹ "Funny Girl to Herald Opening of new Broadway," *Southeast Missourian*, February 10, 1970; "February opening planned at new Broadway Theater," *Southeast Missourian*, January 14, 1970.

¹² Melissa Miller, "After 50 years, Cape's Town Plaza remains commercial hub," *Southeast Missourian*, October 1, 2010.

¹³ "Kerasotes Remodels Broadway Theatre," *Boxoffice Magazine*, October 19, 1970; Southern Missouri movie theatres; "Grand theater to close its doors," *Bulletin Journal*, March 15, 1984.

¹⁴ Heidi Nieland, "When it comes to fun, recreation can be a family affair," *Southeast Missourian*, July 11, 1995; Tamara Zellers Buck, "Broadway Theater to close for summer," *Southeast Missourian*, May 23, 1997.

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demolished.¹⁵ The Esquire, completed in 1947 and listed in the National Register for its Art Deco architecture and its representation of the golden age of film represents, remained in operation as a first-run movie house until 1984. It closed for good in 1985 after a brief stint as a discount movie theater, bringing the curtain down on the Broadway district's once proud role as the entertainment hub of Southeast Missouri.¹⁶

History of the Broadway Theatre

The Cape Theatre and Realty Company was incorporated by William Vedder, W.G. Bartels, John Sackman, A.W. Blattner and Charles O. Hobbs in 1921.¹⁷ The corporation was formed to "carry on the business of theatrical proprietors, music-hall proprietors, caterers for public entertainment, concerts and public exhibitions, ballets, conjuring, juggling, moving picture and other variety entertainments and to provide, engage and employ actors, dancers, singers, variety performers, athletes and theatrical and musical artists, and to produce and present to the public all sorts of shows, exhibitions and amusements which are or may be produced at a theatre or music hall."¹⁸ The corporation was also legally created to own, hold, rent, lease, manage or otherwise procure a piece of retail property to its stated purpose.¹⁹

The company was incorporated in the State of Missouri on June 17, 1921 and was valued at forty thousand dollars.²⁰ The corporation leased the property that would become the Broadway Theatre to S.E. Brady for fifty-five thousand dollars on July 20, 1921. The value of the two lots was estimated at eight thousand, five hundred dollars.²¹ Brady was contractually obligated to construct a building suitable for theatrical purposes and was given exact measurements for construction. Brady was in charge of purchasing the theatre seats, movie screens, scenery for live productions, machinery, signs, curtains, and all other essential items to be installed into the theatre. The theatre included 9,440 square feet of space with a stage, lobby, 1200-person seating in the theatre, and two storefronts, one on either side of the main lobby area.²²

The construction of the Broadway Theatre began after the contract was finalized with Brady and had a projected completion date of early October of the same year. Delays in construction and cost overruns, however, pushed the theatre's completion back until

¹⁵ Ken Steinhoff, "Rialto: Gone, Gone, Gone," Cape Girardeau History and Photos, <http://www.capecentralhigh.com/cape-photos/broadway/rialto-gone-gone-gone/> (accessed 12/19/2013).

¹⁶ Terri Foley, "Esquire Theatre National Register of Historic Places, Cape Girardeau County," listed September 15, 2005.

¹⁷ Cape Girardeau County Recorder of Deeds. Book 71 (1921):541-542.

¹⁸ Ibid., 542.

¹⁹ Ibid., 541-542.

²⁰ Ibid., 580-581.

²¹ Cape Girardeau County Recorder of Deeds. Book 74 (1921): 95-99.

²² Ibid., 96-99; "Simply Beautiful!" says expert of fine building," *Southeast Missourian*.

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close to Christmas of 1921. Construction costs exceeded the original estimate by close to fifty thousand dollars and Brady was asked by the corporation to invest his own money to make up the difference. Brady invested seventy five thousand dollars into the theatre project and additional interior luxuries were included in the final phases of the project. These included an air conditioning system and all the equipment and essentials necessary to accommodate a live orchestra in the theatre.²³

The theatre was described by the *Southeast Missourian* as “simply beautiful” and bustling with activity on opening day, December 24, 1921. The newspaper noted that theatre owner Brady “heaved a sigh of relief” as the reels of his opening show, *The Sheik*, played without a hitch. The movie equipment, heating and lighting were all in working order for the big opening show on Broadway.²⁴ The Broadway Theatre was fireproof and had a standard stage with all of the scenery equipment needed to put on a great show. The lighting was wired to a dimmer so lights could fade in and out with the scenes and the color of the lights could be changed along with their intensity. The heating and cooling systems were the best Brady could buy at the time and it was claimed that “no matter how large the crowd” the temperature inside the theatre remained perfect.²⁵

Small Town Theatres

Theatre historian Maggie Valentine argues that the American theatre style of the early twentieth century was symbolic of its time. A product of the emotions a theatre provoked in its audience, theatre design reflected the life, politics, culture and romance of the early twentieth century. A theatre’s architecture connected the audience to the action and experience by immersing patrons in a totally new environment. The lights, molding, seats, stage, projector, lobby and ticket taker were all aspects of a theatre’s grand design and were all-important elements for creating a positive and memorable experience.²⁶

The Broadway Theatre brought these modern theatrical elements to patrons in Southeast Missouri. Listing the various ways in which the designers allowed for “no sharp corners” in the auditorium, such as the ceiling blending into the walls, the *Southeast Missourian* explained that “through these modern ways the sound waves are not permitted to strike against a bleak turn or sharp corner, thus preventing echoes.”²⁷ Boasting the latest technology in the entertainment industry, tickets were sold in the

²³ Jeanie Eddleman, *Shadows of Cape Girardeau County Yesteryears Graphite Drawings and Narratives* (Marble Hill: Remembering When Publications, 2010); “Simply Beautiful!” says expert of fine building,” *Southeast Missourian*; “Broadway Theatre Anniversary,” *Southeast Missourian*, December 28, 1946.

²⁴ “Simply Beautiful!” says expert of fine building,” *Southeast Missourian*, December 24, 1921.

²⁵ “Cape Girardeau Home of Paramount Pictures,” *Southeast Missourian*, September 2, 1922.

²⁶ Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 1-3.

²⁷ “Simply Beautiful!” says expert of fine building,” *Southeast Missourian*, December 24, 1921.

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lobby “by a machine, the seller merely making the change.”²⁸ In describing the auditorium, the newspaper noted that “the work around the stage is also particularly effective and rich.”²⁹ In addition, not only did the theatre have a “wonderful lighting system” with “four colors besides white” and what was known as “a ‘dimmer system’ of lighting,” but it also contained “two of the largest and finest picture machines made.”³⁰ According to the *Southeast Missourian*, “the factory expert who came to install the machines said it is one of the largest and finest projection rooms and equipment he had ever run across and that no theatre could have one more complete.”³¹

A community’s theatre provided a sense of place, a reason to interact socially and it served as the setting for recreational activities for community members and visitors. For decades the theatre was the primary destination for entertainment. Theatres encouraged escaping life for a while purely for enjoyment purposes. They provided venues for town meetings, school plays, political functions, cooking schools and other assorted community activities that needed the space a theatre could provide. In a guide to theatre management published in 1928, the theatre’s local contribution was described as greater than just an outlet of creativity; “if guided intelligently and controlled by persons who recognize their moral responsibility” a theater would have a far greater impact and value on the community in which it was built.³² The theatre was the place to “see and be seen;” on a night out at the theatre you could see who was on a date with whom and it was a “community oriented experience.”³³ The Broadway Theatre is an excellent example of exactly this type of small town community theatre.

Although the grand theatres built in large cities between the 1920’s and the 1930’s tended to isolate themselves from other commercial buildings, in small towns, theatres were constructed to blend into their neighborhood’s commercial environment while still keeping elements that set them apart. Theatres in small towns like Cape Girardeau often shared the street with grocery stores, barbers, churches and other businesses. Not only was the Broadway Theatre located on a block with commercial buildings on either side, the theatre building itself had storefronts “on either side of the lobby, one occupied by a men’s shop and the other by a book shop.”³⁴ Theatre historian Marilyn Casto argues, in her book *Actors, Audiences & Historic Theatres of Kentucky*, that small town theatres needed to blend in and stand out at the same time. Small things set

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Harold B. Franklin, “ Motion Picture Theater Management,” in *Movie Going in America*, ed. Gregory A. Waller, 117-123 (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2002) , 123.

³³ Kevin Corbett, “Bad Sound and Sticky Floors,” in *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, ed. Katherine H. Fuller-Seeley, 233-250 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 244.

³⁴ Ibid.

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them apart, but they were usually not as elaborate as their big city counterparts.³⁵ Reflecting this subtle distinctiveness, pilasters, decorative bands above the second story, glazed bricks and other subtle adornments can be seen in the Broadway Theatre's design. When the Broadway Theatre opened in 1921, the *Southeast Missourian* reported under a sub heading entitled "An Artistic 'Front'," that "the exterior is not pretentious as a whole, although the main entrance... is very attractive."³⁶ This understated elegance is also seen on the interior, with the *Southeast Missourian* reporting that "art critics have declared the ornamental work in this building to be superior to any in St. Louis. They say that in several of the nicest and newest theaters in St. Louis too much ornamental work was used, while in the New Broadway there is just enough to make it artistic."³⁷ Continuing in the same vein, the newspaper reported that "the art plaster work must be seen several times to be appreciated. It is not overdone in any respect and can best be described by saying that it is 'simply elegant.'"³⁸

The Broadway Theatre and the Community

The Broadway Theatre quickly became an important part of local, community life. From the very start, the Broadway Theatre was the people's theatre. In advising the mayor of Cape Girardeau, James A. Barks, on what to tell the audience in his opening-day speech, Brady said to "tell the people that it is their theatre" and that he would "get satisfaction of managing its affairs as the people direct."³⁹ The theatre was from the very beginning a place for Cape Girardeau residents to enjoy quality entertainment they helped select. Brady wanted his patrons to let him know when they did and did not like a production.⁴⁰

Brady's desire to get to know his customers was characteristic of theatre managers of the time. Theatre management publications routinely conveyed advice to owners and managers throughout the theatre community on methods of increasing theatre patronage, suggesting that patrons wanted to feel like they owned the theatre.⁴¹ As a result, theatre managers absorbed as much information as they could about their patrons. The advice was, if a theatre manager wanted to be successful, he could never know too much about his audience and community.⁴²

³⁵ Marilyn Casto, *Actors, Audiences & Historic Theatres of Kentucky*, 3.

³⁶ "Simply Beautiful!" says expert of fine building," *Southeast Missourian*.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Samuel L. Rothafel "Roxy", "What the Public Wants in the Picture Theatre (1925)," in *Moviegoing in America*, ed. Gregory A. Waller, 100-102 (Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc. , 2002).

⁴² John F. Barry and Epes W. Sargent, "Building Theatre Patronage (1927)," in *Moviegoing in America* , 110-115 (Malden : Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2002).

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The Broadway Theatre was enthusiastically embraced by the Cape Girardeau community. For example, during the early 1920s the *Southeast Missourian* sponsored an annual live music event as an entertainment offering to the citizens of Cape Girardeau. To celebrate the grand opening of the Broadway Theatre, the *Missourian* brought in the widely celebrated baritone Perey Hemaus and his company to perform Mozart's comic opera, *The Impresario*.⁴³ By combining its annual "musical treat" for the community with the grand opening of the theatre, the *Missourian* proclaimed that the theatre was going to be an important fixture in Cape Girardeau's entertainment landscape for some time to come.⁴⁴

The Broadway Theatre is also significant because it was not just an important business for the city of Cape Girardeau, but served the entire Southeast Missouri region. As the "largest and finest building of the kind in Missouri south of St. Louis," the Broadway Theatre was "not merely an amusement place for Cape Girardeau but an institution for the entire district."⁴⁵ According to the local newspaper, "Motion picture men" said the theatre was the "finest house in Missouri outside of St. Louis and Kansas City," and quoted a drummer (traveling salesman) as saying "You hear more about the New Broadway Theatre in other Southeast Missouri towns than in Cape Girardeau."⁴⁶ According to Brady, the theatre was "the center or headquarters for entertainment in this great district. There is not a night that delegations from other towns are not present."⁴⁷

During its heyday between 1921 and 1960, the Broadway Theatre offered a variety of popular entertainments such as style reviews and operettas, and drew large crowds not only from Cape Girardeau but from the region as well.⁴⁸ Some events at the Broadway Theatre included people from as far away as Marble Hill and Perryville to the north and Charleston, New Madrid, Caruthersville, Malden and Kennett to the south.⁴⁹ In 1922, the students of the Broadway School performed the operetta "A Mid-Summer's Day" to a standing room only crowd.⁵⁰ Walter Jenkins, "reputed to be the greatest leader of community singing in the world," played at the theatre in 1926.⁵¹ In 1928, as part of the *Missourian's* annual entertainment offering, the operetta "Naughty Marietta" was

⁴³ "Simply Beautiful!' says expert of fine building," *Southeast Missourian*.

⁴⁴ "Impresario delights crowd with fine treat," *Southeast Missourian*, January 3, 1921, p. 1.

⁴⁵ "Cape Girardeau Home of Paramount Pictures," *Southeast Missourian*; "Cape Girardeau's New Theatre; One of the Country's Finest, Opens Tonight," *Southeast Missourian*, December 24, 1921.

⁴⁶ "Cape Girardeau's New Theatre; One of the Country's Finest, Opens Tonight," *Southeast Missourian*, December 24, 1921; "Cape Girardeau Home of Paramount Pictures," *Southeast Missourian*.

⁴⁷ "Cape Girardeau Home of Paramount Pictures," *Southeast Missourian*.

⁴⁸ "Era comes to an End in Cape: Broadway Theater Closed; Served Almost 39 Years," *Southeast Missourian*, October 19, 1960.

⁴⁹ "Entire District Represented in Operetta Crowd," *Southeast Missourian*, December 11, 1928.

⁵⁰ "Broadway Children Delight Throng with Pretty Operetta," *Southeast Missourian*, May 3, 1922; "Annual Operetta of Central High Thursday Night," *Southeast Missourian*, January 12, 1929.

⁵¹ "Walter Jenkins to Give Two Concerts in Cape Girardeau," *Southeast Missourian*, June 25, 1926.

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performed to a large crowd from “virtually every town and community in Southeast Missouri.”⁵² The *Missourian* reported that “the towns having representatives present included Morley, Charleston, Marble Hill, Pochahontas, Parma, Perryville, New Madrid, Patton, Jackson, Dexter, Chaffee, Sikeston, Lutesville, Bloomfield, Caruthersville, Morehouse, Kennett, Benton, Illmo, Fornfelt, Portageville, Malden, Kennett (sic) and many others.”⁵³ The paper then proceeded to name many of the region’s elites who were in attendance, including such luminaries as E.A. Reissaus, a prominent banker from Chaffee, H.E. Guth, a publisher from Perryville, and John Himmelberger of Morehouse, president of the Himmelberger-Harrison Lumber Company. Cast members were surprised that “a city this small could handle such a production in the manner in which it was taken care of,” and the paper noted that Cape Girardeau was “one of the smallest cities where the operetta [had] been presented;” after the company left Cape Girardeau, they traveled to Indianapolis, IN, a more typically-sized venue for the cast.⁵⁴ By bringing events of this magnitude to the stage, the Broadway Theatre served as an entertainment venue for the region and solidified Cape Girardeau’s role as a regional center.

Over the years, the Broadway Theatre played host to a variety of musicians, actors, actresses, movies, and other community organizations. During the Broadway Theatre’s first years, a Junior Orpheum vaudeville show played on Friday and Saturdays each week with the Broadway orchestra performing during the shows. The orchestra was a complement to the vaudeville shows, and the theatre was typically full for each show (see Figure 4).⁵⁵

The Broadway Theatre was also regular host to one of the region’s most prominent jazz bands, “Peg Meyer’s Original Melody Kings” (see Figure 5). Peg Meyer recalled in his memoir, *Back Woods Jazz in the Twenties*, that not only was the Broadway Theatre one of only three motion picture theatres in Cape Girardeau that employed musicians during the 1920s, but also once a month his orchestra would put on a stage show. Meyer recalled, “during that time the Broadway Theatre had three acts of vaudeville every Friday and Saturday, but on one weekend a month, they would omit the vaudeville acts, and my group would put on a stage show.”⁵⁶ Of the three theatres using musicians that Meyer recalled—the Broadway Theatre, the Park Theater, and the Orpheum Theatre—only the Broadway Theatre survives.⁵⁷

⁵² “Entire District Represented in Operetta Crowd,” *Southeast Missourian*.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ “Cape Girardeau Home of Paramount Pictures,” *Southeast Missourian*.

⁵⁶ Peg Meyer, *Back Woods Jazz in the Twenties* (Southeast Missouri State University, Center for Regional History, 1989), 110.

⁵⁷ Meyer, *Back Woods Jazz in the Twenties*, 136; Sanders, “Moving Pictures,” *Southeast Missourian*.

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Although the first “talkies” to play in Cape Girardeau were screened at the Orpheum Theatre in January 1929, five months later, in May 1929, the Broadway Theatre showed *Alias Jimmy Valentine*, the first full-length motion picture with part-talking to play in Cape Girardeau.⁵⁸ On May 25, 1929 the Broadway Theatre sent its orchestra home and the theatre officially became a talking film theatre. Manager Brady waited as long as he felt necessary to make the change and had some reservations about talking films before finally making the decision. Brady waited until the technology had been proven and bought the best equipment money could buy to start showing talking features. Brady chose to make the film admission the same cost as non-talking features so that he would not lose patrons.⁵⁹

In 1929, the theatre was acquired by the Fox Midwest Theatres Company, along with the Park Theatre, and operated as the Fox Broadway.⁶⁰ Even under new corporate ownership, however, the Broadway Theatre continued to play an important role as an entertainment venue for the city and region. On New Year’s Eve 1930, alone among the theatres in town, the Broadway Theatre showed a midnight movie to welcome in the New Year, with the paper reporting that “noise-makers, hats and other New Year fun-makers will be provided.”⁶¹ The Broadway Theatre housed the *Southeast Missourian’s* Cooking School from 1933 to 1942, when the school closed for World War II. The annual event was enormously popular and always played to packed houses (see Figure 6).⁶² In addition to offering motion picture entertainments, the Broadway Theatre continued to host style reviews, operettas, and, well into the 1950s, the Miss Cape Girardeau pageant.⁶³ The theatre even premiered Cape Girardeau’s own movie, “We’re in the Movies.” According to Sharon Saunders, archivist for the *Southeast Missourian*, “On May 15, 1940, 3,762 Girardeans crammed into the Broadway Theatre in four showings to watch themselves and their neighbors on the big screen.”⁶⁴ The silent movie was filmed in color in just one week, and was apparently part of a series of local

⁵⁸ Sanders, “Moving Pictures,” *Southeast Missourian*; Owens, “Saturday afternoons at the Orpheum,” *Southeast Missourian*, February 21, 2002; “Talking Pictures Introduced,” *Southeast Missourian*, May 25, 1929.

⁵⁹ “Talking Pictures Introduced,” *Southeast Missourian*.

⁶⁰ “Southern Missouri movie theatres.”

⁶¹ “Girardeau to Greet 1931 as Old Year Goes; Watch Parties, Social Events Chief Bill for Tonight,” *Southeast Missourian*, December 31, 1930.

⁶² “Crowd at Cooking School is Larger; Final Session to Be Conducted Friday Afternoon,” *Southeast Missourian*, April 25, 1935; “First Cooking School Session,” *Southeast Missourian*, April 21, 1936; “Missourian Cooking School to Open Tuesday; Lecturer to Cape Sees Renewed Interest,” *Southeast Missourian*, April 24, 1937; “Making Cooking Practical Aim of Missourian Lecturer,” *Southeast Missourian*, February 20, 1939; “Morning Cooking School Draws Crowd to Opening 1941 Session; more than 800 homemakers present for initial conference held at theater,” *Southeast Missourian*, February 25, 1941.

⁶³ “Selected as ‘Miss Cape Girardeau,’” *Southeast Missourian*, August 31, 1955; “Fame, Fortune Await 1937 Miss America,” *Southeast Missourian*, July 3, 1937; “Dorothy Seabaugh Selected as ‘Miss Cape Girardeau,’” *Southeast Missourian*, May 4, 1928.

⁶⁴ Sharon Saunders, “Cape’s own movie,” From the Morgue, *Southeast Missourian*, posted July 12, 2012 (<http://www.semmissourian.com/blogs/fromthemorgue/entry/48032>, accessed October 19, 2013).

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films the John B. Rogers Producing Co., of Fostoria, Ohio made throughout the Midwest.⁶⁵ When the citizens of Cape Girardeau came together to celebrate themselves, they chose to do so at the Broadway Theatre.

Conclusion

The Broadway Theatre retained its reputation throughout its life as an active theatre. Paul Meyer, manager for the theatre between 1970 and 1985, noted “For years, the Broadway carried the title of the biggest movie theater between St. Louis and Memphis. I don’t think there’s still any single house that can beat it.”⁶⁶ From the moment it opened in 1921, when the *Southeast Missourian* proclaimed in a headline that the theatre had been “Declared to Be Finest Theatre Building in Missouri Outside Two Largest Cities,” until it closed for eight years in 1960, the Broadway Theatre was an entertainment icon for Cape Girardeau and the entire Southeast Missouri region.⁶⁷

The Broadway Theatre is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, Entertainment/Recreation. Constructed in 1921, it is the earliest surviving theatre in Cape Girardeau. The theatre continually entertained a packed auditorium of Cape Girardeau and Southeast Missouri residents during its period of significance. It provided a location to conduct community activities during the vaudeville and silent film era and it continued to serve that function even as it adapted to changes in the film industry, such as the introduction of talking movies. Although it has undergone renovations over the last ninety years, it is able to convey successfully the look and feel of an early-twentieth century theatre, and serves as an important reminder of an earlier age of entertainment in Missouri when regional venues like the Broadway Theatre brought modern entertainment to the residents of Cape Girardeau and the surrounding Southeast Missouri region

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ “Grand theater to close its doors,” *Bulletin Journal*, March 15, 1984.

⁶⁷ “Simply Beautiful!’ says expert of fine building,” *Southeast Missourian*.

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--- "Broadway Theatre Anniversary," December 28, 1946.

--- "Cape Girardeau Home of Paramount Pictures," September 2, 1922.

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--- "Crowd at Cooking School is Larger; Final Session to Be Conducted Friday Afternoon," April 25, 1935.

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- "Downtown structure to be taken down," February 5, 1989.
- "Entire District Represented in Operetta Crowd," December 11, 1928.
- "Era comes to an End in Cape: Broadway Theater Closed; Served Almost 39 Years," October 19, 1960.
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- "February opening planned at new Broadway Theater," January 14, 1970.
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- "Funny Girl to Herald Opening of new Broadway," February 10, 1970.
- "Girardeau to Greet 1931 as Old Year Goes; Watch Parties, Social Events Chief Bill for Tonight," December 31, 1930.
- "Impressario delights crowd with fine treat," January 3, 1921, p. 1.
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County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Steinhoff, Ken. "Rialto: Gone, Gone, Gone," Cape Girardeau History and Photos,
<http://www.capecentralhigh.com/cape-photos/broadway/rialto-gone-gone-gone/>
(accessed 12/19/2013).

Valentine, Maggie. *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk*. New Haven: Yale University
Press, 199

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Broadway Theatre
Name of Property
Cape Girardeau County, Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Verbal Boundary Description

All the fractional part of lots 28 and 29, Range D, in the City of Cape Girardeau, Missouri as follows: Beginning 30 feet west of the N.E. corner of lot 29, Range D on Broadway, then run west 60 feet, along the South side of Broadway, thence South parallel with Ellis Street, 173 ½ feet, thence East parallel with Broadway 60 feet, thence North parallel with Ellis Street 173 1/2 feet, to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

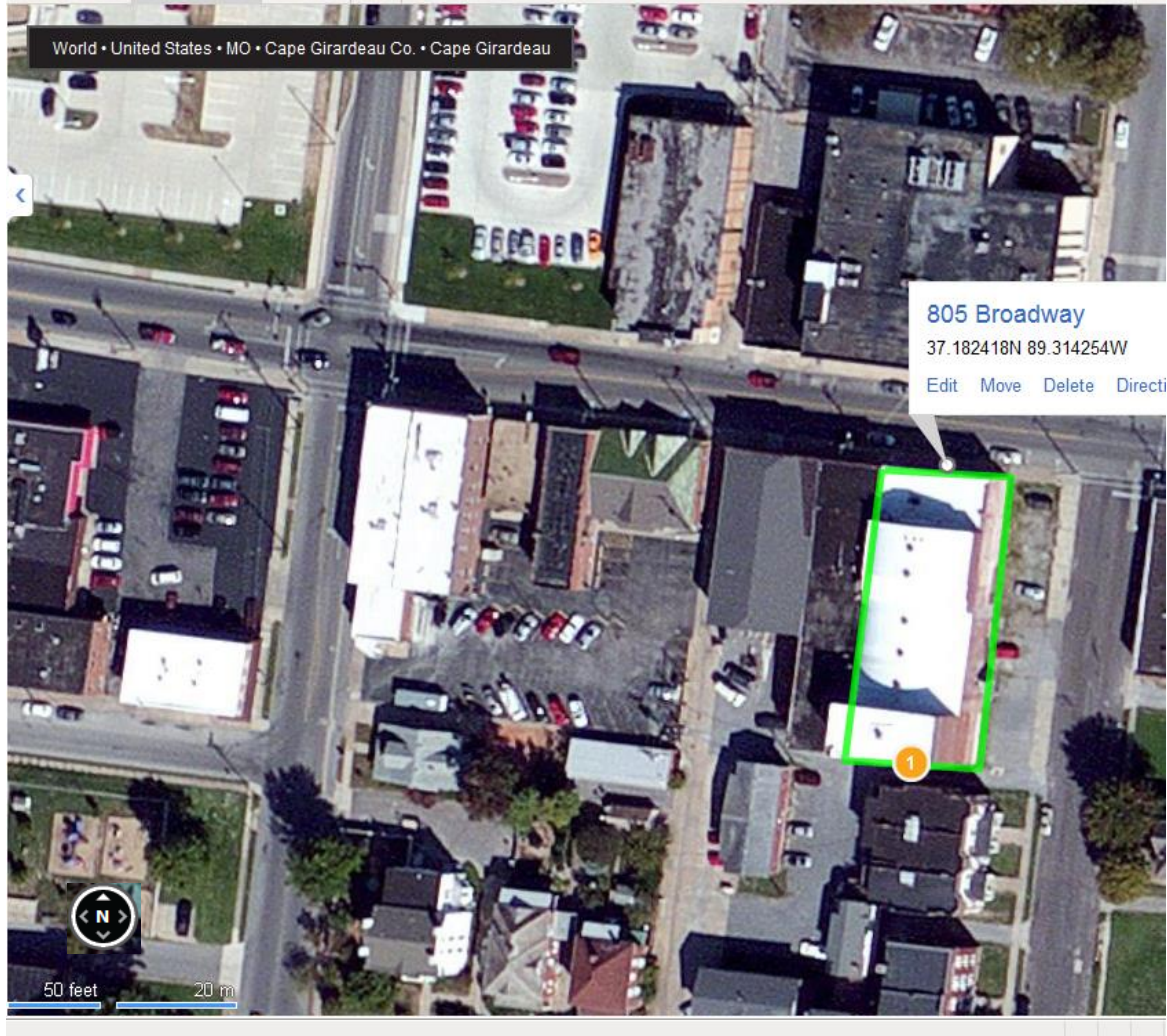
The boundary is the parcel historically associated with the Broadway Theatre at 805 Broadway within the city limits of Cape Girardeau, Missouri (see Figure 1)

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Broadway Theatre
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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 1



Site Map

Coordinates:

37.306688 -89.528497
Latitude: Longitude:

Source: Google Maps, accessed September 18, 2013

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 23

Broadway Theatre

Name of Property

Cape Girardeau County, Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 2



Broadway Theatre, circa 1920s. Image courtesy Southeast Missouri State University Special Collections and Archives (Postcard Collection, Box 1005, 17.040, Special Collections and Archives, Southeast Missouri State University).

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Broadway Theatre
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Figure 3



Remodeled Broadway Theatre reopened February 20, 1970, with the movie "Funny Girl" after being closed for several years. Photo credit: *Southeast Missourian*.

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Broadway Theatre

Name of Property
Cape Girardeau County, Missouri

County and State
N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 4



View from the stage of a packed house at the Broadway Theatre, circa 1920s. Image courtesy of Cape Girardeau County Archive Center.

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Continuation Sheet

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Broadway Theatre

Name of Property
Cape Girardeau County, Missouri

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 5



Peg Meyer and the Original Melody Kings on the stage of the Broadway Theatre, 1924.
Image courtesy of Cape Girardeau County Archive Center.

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Broadway Theatre

Name of Property

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County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 6



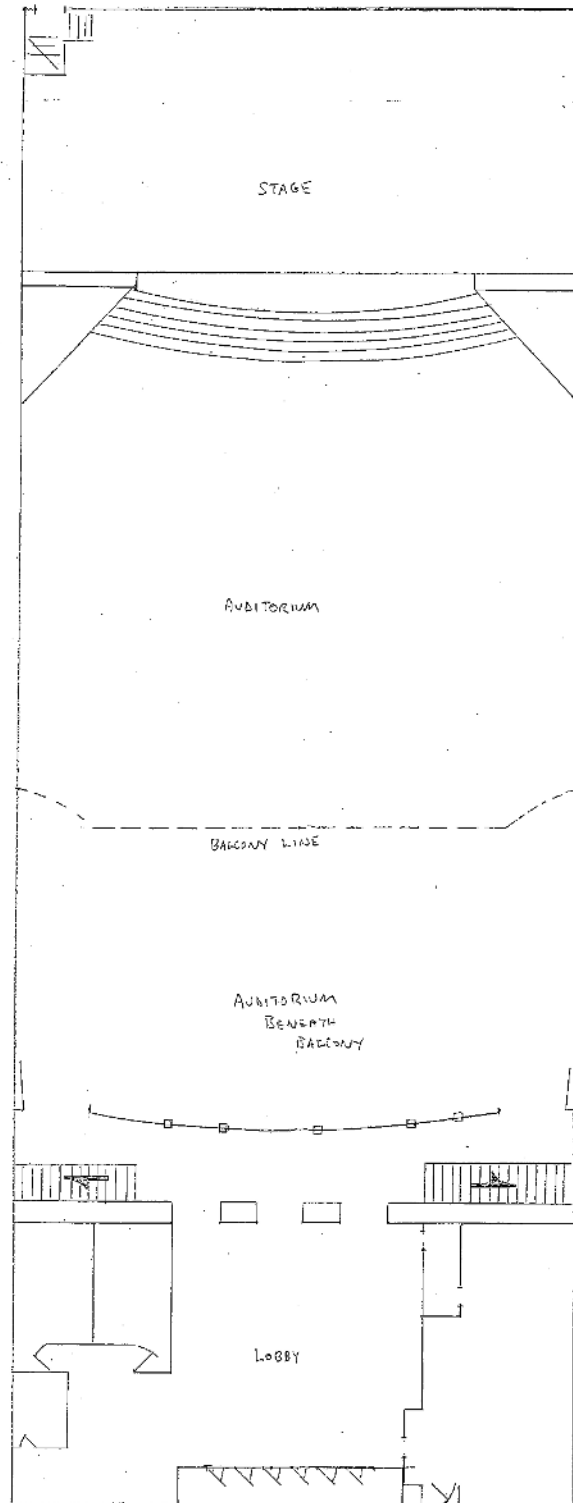
The *Missourian's* thirteenth annual Cooking Show, February 20, 1939. The caption under the photo, published in the *Southeast Missourian*, reads: "This picture shows every seat filled, with the usherettes standing at the rear. The rapt expressions on the faces of the homemakers gathered for the school indicate what steady attention they gave to everything said and done on the stage." *Southeast Missourian*, February 20, 1939.

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

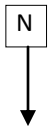
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Broadway Theatre
Name of Property
Cape Girardeau County, Missouri
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N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 7



(Not to scale)
Floor Plan



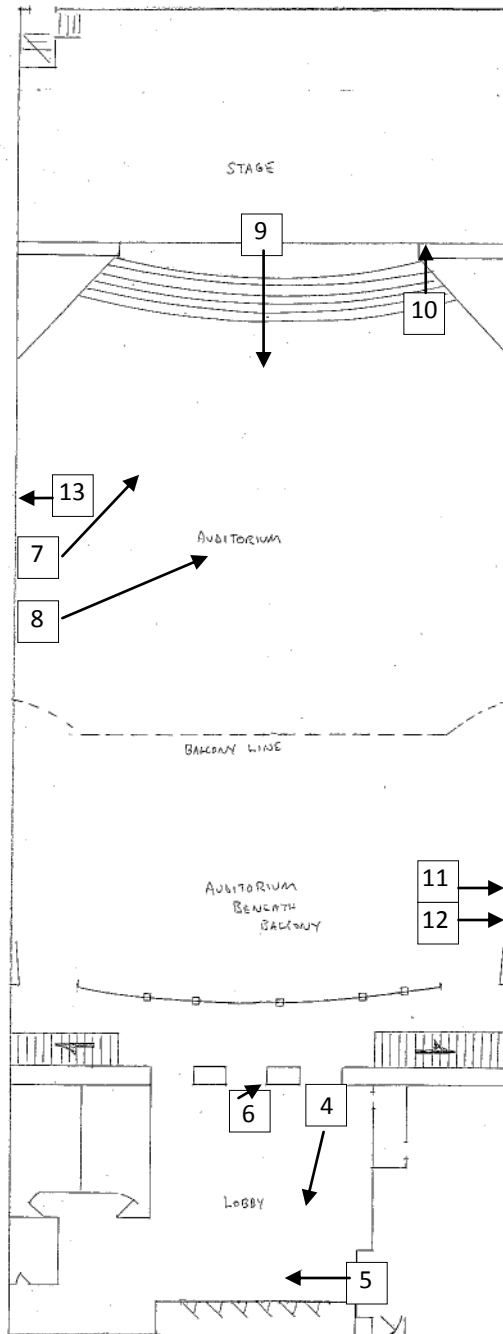
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 29

Broadway Theatre
Name of Property
Cape Girardeau County, Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 8

3 →



(Not to scale)

Photo Key

Source: Steven Hoffman, August 2014

2 ↗

1 ↑

N ↓

Shop **BROADWAY FASHION SHOP**

Dress up yourself & your Phone



805

PHONE CASES

THURSDOWN 1573

Handwritten graffiti on a dark wooden door







Broadway
Ellis

BROADWAY FASHION SHOP
Dress up yourself & your Phone

PHONE CASES









EXIT

208

FOR RENT

FOR RENT





































