

TEMPORARY HISTORIC DESIGNATION PETITION

1. Name of Property: State Theater  
Address of Property: 2612-16 W State St 53233  
Zip Code

2. Name and Address of Owner  
Name: City of Milwaukee - Redevel Auth  
Street Address: 809 N Broadway  
City: Milwaukee State: WI Zip Code: 53202  
Daytime Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Area Code)

Applicant (if different from owner) Jim Dieter  
Street Address: 2432 WEST KILBOURN AVE  
City: Milwaukee State: WI Zip Code: 53233  
Daytime Phone Number: 414-344-8126 Evening Phone Number 414-344-8126

3. Attachments

The following information is enclosed:

- Exterior photographs or digital images (required)
- Copy of newspaper notice of demolition permit application
- Copy of Orders from the Department of Neighborhood Services
- Other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Legal Property Description

Assessment Subd No 54 in NW 1/4 sec 30-7-22  
Block 278 E. 37.84' of S 172.8' Lot 18 and  
W 17.16' (Lots 13-17 & S 15' Lot 12, Adj BID #10

5. Description of Structure

Number of stories: 2

Wall cladding (check each that apply)

Clapboard  Brick  Stucco  Stone  Wood Shingle  Terra Cotta   
Asphalt Siding  Asbestos Tile  Aluminum/Vinyl Siding  Artificial Stone   
Other: Tile decorative, limestone cut.

Describe Outstanding Features:

Decorative parapets

6. Significance

Areas of Significance:

- agriculture
- architecture
- art
- commerce
- communications
- community planning
- conservation
- science
- social/humanitarian

- economics
- education
- engineering
- exploration/settlement
- industry
- invention
- landscape architecture
- theater
- other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

- law
- literature
- military
- music
- philosophy
- politics/government
- religion
- transportation

Date Built: 1915

Date Altered (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Builder/Architect: unknown

Written Statement of Significance, including history of structure:  
(continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

7. Major Bibliographical References

8. Form Prepared By:

Name: James Dieter Date: FEB, 10, 2017  
 Address: 2432 West Kilbourn Ave  
 City: MILWAUKEE State: WI Zip Code: 53233  
 Telephone: 414-344-8126  
 Signature: James Dieter

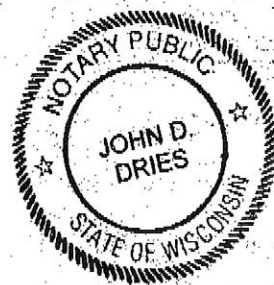
Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission  
 Office of the City Clerk  
 200 E. Wells Street Room B-4  
 Milwaukee, WI 53202

414-286-5722

State of Wisconsin  
 Milwaukee County

Subscribed and sworn to  
 before me by James Dieter  
 on February 10, 2017.

John D. Dries  
 Notary Public, State of Wisconsin  
 My Commission is Permanent



**Final Report**

**West Side Neighborhood  
Historic Resources Survey**

**City of Milwaukee  
Wisconsin**

**September, 1984**

"This project has been funded with the assistance of a grant-in-aid from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Historic Preservation grants-in-aid are administered in Wisconsin in conjunction with the National Register of Historic Places program by the Historic Preservation Division of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. However, the contents and opinions contained in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the National Park Service or the State Historical Society of Wisconsin."

**Prepared by:** City of Milwaukee  
Department of City Development

**Project Supervisor:** Les Vollmert

**Principle Investigators:** Carlen Hatala  
Robin Wenger

**Typing:** Marguerite Cocroft  
Mary Ellen Jorgensen  
Susan Rejman

**Abstract**

The West Side Neighborhood Intensive Survey was undertaken by the Department of City Development in 1984 as part of the development of the City of Milwaukee's Comprehensive Historic Preservation Master Plan. The project intensively surveyed the West Side neighborhood bounded approximately by West Wisconsin Avenue on the south, the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad tracks on the west, West Vliet Street on the north and I-43 on the east. The major products of the survey include inventory data forms for each building within the study area, with the exception of residential garages, extensive research into the thematic history of the West Side as summarized in this report, and a multiple resource format National Register Nomination including all eligible properties and districts in the study area.

(see Commerce). In 1927 the Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Co. had their garage in the building. It remained a transit garage through 1959. In 1963 the Wisconsin Telephone Company took over the existing structures and remains there today. The Telephone Company has since replaced the original building with a new one.

### Theaters

The form of entertainment which had the greatest longevity on the West Side was the motion picture show. Its roots were in the nickelodeans and movie arcades which were adapted from commercial storefronts in the early years of the 20th Century. Flickers, as early motion pictures were called, were commonly teamed with vaudeville acts or other live entertainment and had been popular since the late 1890s. It wasn't until World War I that buildings were commonly constructed specifically for movie viewing. The West Side survey area could boast three such theaters.

### State Theater

The State Theater was the earliest of the three, having been built in 1915 at a cost of approximately \$15,000 for a Mr. Rice. S. W. Andree was the architect. It is located near the intersection of 27th and State Streets, which was a bustling commercial strip at the time. The modest, brown brick State, only 55' x 122', served as a no-frills local neighborhood theater. (MI 69-32) An addition in 1923, 44' x 55', was built for commercial purposes and designed by Lindl, Lesser and Schutte. (Building Permits) Examples of such small movie



houses are becoming scarce in Milwaukee. Demolition and conversion into other uses has been common. By 1954, the State no longer ran movies and the building was occupied by the Milwaukee Evangelistic Temple. In 1955, it was converted into its present use as a nightclub. The current name is The Palms.

### Tower Theater

In contrast to the State, the Tower Theater was built in 1925 as a neighborhood movie palace. It is located at the southwest corner of 27th and Wells Streets. Dick and Bauer, theater architects, designed the \$300,000 complex which consisted of stores, offices, and the movie house. (MI 115-24) The MAL Investment Co. (M. L. Annenberg) was the original owner, but ownership had passed to the Prudential Theater Co. of Wisconsin by 1960 and to United Artists Theaters of Wisconsin Inc. by 1971. (Building Permits) The building was constructed to basically the same plans as the Colonial, another neighborhood theater constructed about the same time at 1513 West Vliet, but with Spanish motifs superimposed on the interior. A large windowed tower on the exterior made the building easy to recognize as a theater. Viewing movies at the Tower has always been a special occasion. Oriental rugs, a large lobby, and a grand staircase up to the balcony imparted a sense of grandeur to the occasion. "Thirty years ago you had to get dressed up to go to the Tower" stated one reminiscence. (Marquee, Headley, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1971, p. 7 and Milwaukee Sentinel, Janz, 2/19/1976)

In 1975 the Tower's movie career came to an end. It was purchased by Family Hospital for \$120,000 to be used for expansion of the hospital's facilities. In 1978, the floor area of the former theater was converted into an



GO >

RE (Help) Enter Taxkey or Address 2612 w state

### Assessment Detail and Listing Characteristics

Taxkey 3890311000      Premise Address 2612-2616 W STATE ST      Nbrhd 6270      Plat 38932      Assessment County Milwaukee      Class Exempt

#### Ownership Information

CITY OF MILW REDEV AUTH  
809 N BROADWAY  
MILWAUKEE WI 53202

#### Conveyance

Deed Type  
Date  
Fee

PR  
2000-12-14  
138.00

#### Assessment Information

Year  
Land  
Imprv  
Total

Current  
- N/A -  
- N/A -  
- N/A -

Previous  
0  
0  
0

Name or Address Change: 2001-03-30

Org Year	Drop Year	Zoning LB2	Ald. District 4	Census 013700-
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#### Legal Description

ASSESSMENT SUBD NO 54 IN NW 1/4 SEC 30-7-22 BLOCK 278 E 37.84' OF S 172.8' LOT 18 & W 17.16' (LOTS 13 TO 17 & S 15' LOT 12) ADJ BID #10

### Exempt Property Attributes Not Available

<u>Recent Permits</u>	<u>Owner History</u>	<u>Sale History</u> Data Provided By Assessor Query From: 199-195,70,163	<u>Assessment History</u>	<u>Tax Balance</u>	<u>About Site</u>
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Your guide to movie theaters

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Search

Movie Theaters United States Wisconsin Milwaukee Avenues West State Theater

# State Theater

2616 W. State Street, Milwaukee, WI 53208

Closed Demolished 1 screen 1,206 seats

Overview Photos Comments

1 person favored this theater



Viewing: Photo | Street View

The State Theater was opened in December 1915. In 1930 it was taken over by Warner Bros Circuit Management Corp. It was still open in 1956, but had closed by 1957. The shell of the theater stood closed for a long time. It most recently held a night club. In the early-2000's it was in the process of being remodeled. The State Theater was destroyed by a fire on February 9, 2017.

Contributed by Ken Edwards

## Recent comments (view all 13 comments)



JimRankin on August 12, 2006 at 12:52 am

Here is DavidH's comment which had been posted on the VARSITY's page:  
Re: THE STATE THEATER

In the 1920s' silent movie days Hildegarde Sell who went on to be THE INCOMPARABLE HILDEGARDE played the piano at the State. Hildegarde who was billed as the ultimate chanteuse had a popular national radio program THE RALIEGH ROOM in the 1940s and because of her affected mannerism was the butt of many jokes. She also wrote the best seller Over 50 So What?  
posted by DavidH on Aug 11, 2006 at 6:56am



JimRankin on August 12, 2006 at 1:15 am

A PS to DavidH's item about Miss Sell is that she played a number of Milw. theatres at the piano of the 'pit band'. It is not clear whether she began her singing career here,

### Additional Info

Previously operated by:  
Warner Bros. Circuit Management Corp.

Architects:  
Frank W. Andree

### Nearby Theaters

- Tower Theatre
- Liberty Theatre
- Violet Theatre
- Trowbridge Theatre
- Schultz Brothers Electric T...

but there is a biography of her with a publicity photo of her in her pro days here: <http://backwhen.com/whereare.asp?WhereID=25> . She was 97 years at that time, but died about a year ago. Larry Widen has a more recent publicity shot of her in his 1986 "Milwaukee Movie Palaces" which is to be reprinted next year, enlarged, as "Silver Screens."



kencmcintyre on August 12, 2006 at 9:52 am

I drove by this theater a few weeks ago. I have a digital photo, but I'm still working on transferring those here. The ground floor was retail, including a Chinese restaurant, if I recall correctly. The neighborhood was not that great.



NuclearArt on August 26, 2009 at 1:43 pm

It opened in late December 1915 and there was a story about it in the Milwaukee Journal of December 19, 1915.



LouisRugani on June 11, 2010 at 5:54 pm

(April 19, 1930)  
Theatre Deal Goes In Effect At Midnight

Warner Brothers To Take Over Sheboygan Theatre And Other Theatres In Wisconsin

It was unofficially announced today that Warner Bros, one of the leading film companies in the United States, has taken over the Wisconsin branch of the Universal Theatrical Enterprises chain of theatres, and that the concern will assume ownership at 12 o'clock midnight tonight and will start operating these theatres Sunday. Theatres included are the Sheboygan theatre, which was erected at a cost of \$600,000 and which was opened to the public in 1928; Venetian theatre at Racine, Kenosha theatre at Kenosha, and all the Universal theatres in Milwaukee except the Alhambra. Among the Milwaukee theatres are the Lake, State, Downer, Juneau, Nation and Kosciuszko.

The deal, which has been in the course of consummation during the past week, involves millions of dollars in theatre values.

Manager K. G. Wood of the Sheboygan theatre today would not make official comment as to the completion of negotiations, but admitted that he was notified late Friday to take a complete inventory of his theatre, and to check meters at the close of business tonight.

The Sheboygan theatre is one of the most up to date in the state chain. It is equipped with the latest Western electric sound equipment, with new changes and installations made from time to time as improvements are made in the sound facilities. The theatre in Spanish atmospheric design has a seating capacity of 1,600.



pauldrewry on November 4, 2010 at 1:31 pm

Later years it was known as the Electric Ballroom, which became an important role player in Milwaukee's music scene. Some of the acts to have performed were; Elvis Costello, AC/DC & Todd Rundgren. Later it's name was changed to the Palms, hosting such acts as the Police, Metalica, Poco, Pretenders, the Cars and U2. Anyone have dates for when the ballroom open and when the Palms closed? Any photos? Judging from the description, a stage must have been added with a dressing room to the theater. I never had the chance to see any shows there.



kstan48 on June 21, 2011 at 2:04 pm

Here is a video I completed a few years ago on the State Street theater. Thanks to all those who assisted in the background information.

State Street Theater (Video: Youtube) – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nE0psGDGaE>



rekrab on February 5, 2012 at 5:44 pm

In 1950 Peter Rehwaldt and I were 2nd year students at nearby Concordia College and both loved and played the college organ. Peter negotiated the removal of the non operating theater pipe organ and transported it to the attic of his home located just off campus. His Dad was a Concordia professor. We did not get anywhere started on reassembly due to Peter's death from pneumonia in 1951. His family forfeited the

organ to a scrap dealer. I don't remember the organ builder name and I have no pictures of it; only memories. Maybe someone has info on the State Theater organ.



clarkw on March 27, 2012 at 10:57 pm

The State organ was a Kimball of 2 manuals and about 6 ranks. We used to have the Solo windchest from it plus a few other parts in the warehouse with the Oriental Kimball, so some of it survived.



bryceis7 on February 25, 2014 at 9:46 pm

In the late 70's and early 80's I worked in an auto body supply store on the southwest corner of 27th and State. We attended a few concerts at the Electric Ballroom and Palms. I also did some fill in work as a bartender at the tavern to the east of the theater. At that time it was "Wally's". A typical beer and shot joint. Open early in the morning for the 3rd shifters and stayed open till closing. It was also one of the hangouts (and I got to know) some of the AWA "second rate" wrestlers like Bob Amel, Frank Hill and sometimes Kenny Jay.

New Comment

You must login before making a comment.

Empty comment input field

- Contribute something to the conversation
- No personal attacks
- Stay on-topic

[Please read our community guidelines before posting](#) —

Add Comment

Want to be emailed when a new comment is posted about this theater?  
Just [login to your account](#) and subscribe to this theater

Roger Ebert on Cinema Treasures:

"The ultimate web site about movie theaters"



Bonnie

IMAGES  
of America

# MILWAUKEE MOVIE THEATERS



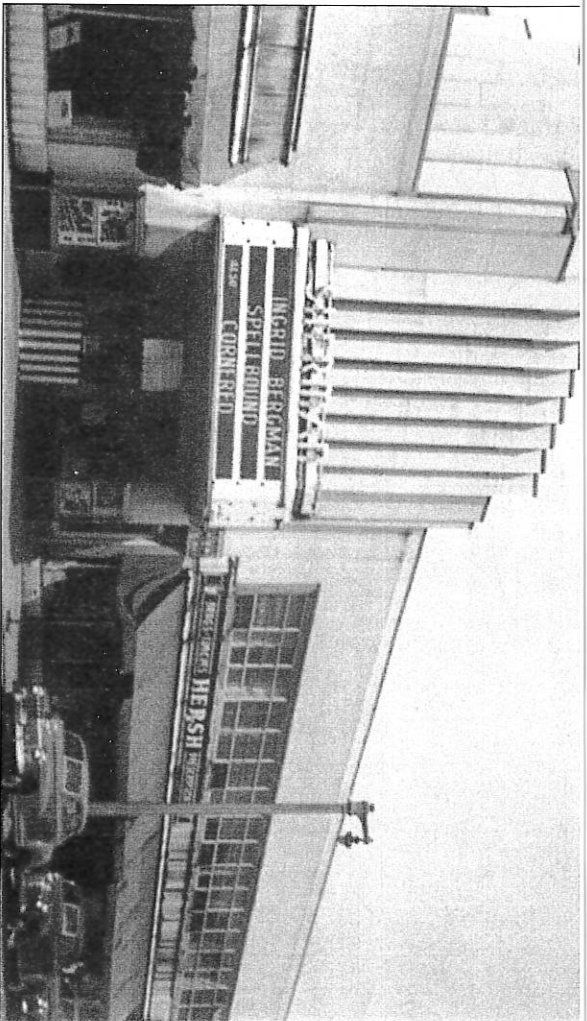
STOP

120-4000

TOMORROW  
**SALUTE**  
MODJESKA



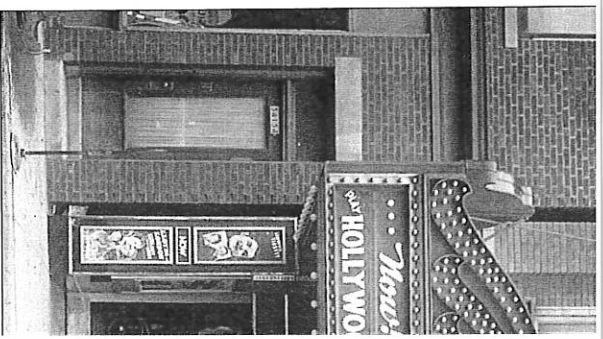




The Sherman closed in the 1970s. Various efforts to restore the theater in the last few decades, including one by Sen. Herb Kohl and Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig, have failed. Kohl and Selig recalled the Sherman as the place where they “figured out how to win World War II on many a Saturday afternoon.” (Courtesy of Karl Thiede.)



The former State Theater came back to life as a 1970s rock nightclub, which was known as the Electric Ballroom and later The Palms. The Ramones, Elvis Costello, Joan Jett, Rick Derringer, and Cheap Trick were among the many bands that played there. In 1981, a photographer snapped the famous picture of Plasmatics’ singer Wendy O. Williams being arrested in the alley.



In 1985, a *Milwaukee Journal* ed showed X-rated films, the subun by thieves who operated in the

The entire terra-cotta facade from the Parkway is now stored in Greg Filardo’s basement. The writer and historian salvaged it piece by piece as the building was being demolished in 1990. (Courtesy of Stuart McCaskill.)

Google Maps 2624 W State St

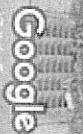




Google Maps

1016 N 27th St

Looking east at State Theater from N 27th Street



**TEMPORARY HISTORIC DESIGNATION PETITION INSTRUCTIONS**

Please type or print clearly.

To request a public hearing on temporary designation in accordance with Section 320-21 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances, it is necessary to complete the attached petition and return it to the staff of the Historic Preservation Commission. In general, the photographs, slides and documentation submitted with this petition are non-returnable. To file a petition, you must be the owner of the subject property, or a resident of the City of Milwaukee, or a City of Milwaukee Alderperson.

**1. Name of Property**

Provide the name by which the property is generally known, if any. Give the full address of the property including zip code.

**2. Name and Address of Owner**

Provide the name, address, and telephone number of the owner. If there are multiple owners of real interest, include all parties, using a separate sheet of paper, if necessary. Provide name, address, and telephone number of the applicant, if different from the owner.

**3. Attachments**

If possible, the petition should be accompanied by a minimum of one clear black-and-white (or color) original photograph at least 3 x 5 inches in size showing the principal exterior elevation of the building. It is advisable to provide additional photographs if the structure merits more extensive pictorial coverage or displays significant features on several elevations. Digital images on a disks or flashdrive are acceptable. To supplement your application, you may want to submit historical documentation as further evidence of why the structure is worthy of historic designation.

**4. Legal Property Description**

Provide the legal property description from the deed or tax assessor's records.

**5. Description of Structure**

Describe the structure's shape, building materials, and exterior features in paragraph form. Specify types and colors materials, the design or pattern of decorative ornament, and the arrangement of architectural elements. Also describe other features on the site such as outbuildings, decorative fences, sculpture, fountains, or landscape treatments that may add to the significance or historic character of the site. Briefly describe additions or alterations and non-historic features. Use continuation sheets, if necessary.

**6. Significance**

In a brief opening paragraph, enumerate the areas of significance checked above and explain specifically why the site is important in each of these categories. In subsequent paragraphs, and on continuation sheets, if necessary, detail the history of the site and the people or events that have contributed to its significance. You may want to attach photocopies of documentation to support and further amplify your research.

**7. Major Bibliographical References**

Include major references. Use continuation sheets, if necessary. Be sure to include publisher, city, and publication dates for books and edition dates for newspapers and periodicals.

**8. Form Prepared By**

Provide your name, your mailing address, and the telephone number where you can be contacted during the day. Have this form acknowledged by a Notary Public.

Please return this form to the following address:

**Historic Preservation Commission  
Office of the City Clerk  
200 E. Wells Street Room B-4  
Milwaukee, WI 53202**

If you have questions or need assistance in completing this form, please call the Historic Preservation staff at (414) 286-5722.