NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x' in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Hippodrome Theater

other name/site number B-2338

2. Location

street & town 12 North Eutaw Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Baltimore ☐ vicinity

state Maryland code MD county independent city code 510 zip code 21201

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 ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date 12-8-99

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
  - ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined eligible for the National Register
  - ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
- ☐ removed from the National Register.
- ☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

Hippodrome Theater (B-2338)
Name of Property

Baltimore city, Maryland
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ public-local
- ☐ private
- ☒ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

- ☐ district
- ☒ building(s)
- ☐ site
- ☐ structure
- ☐ object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture: theater

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals/Beaux Arts

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation masonry
walls brick
roof built-up
other terra cotta

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Hippodrome Theater (B-2338)
Name of Property

Baltimore city, Maryland
County and State

8. Description

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.

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Performing Arts

Architecture

Period of Significance
1914-1949

Significant Dates
1914

Significant Persons
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
n/a

Cultural Affiliation
n/a

Architect/Builder
Thomas White Lamb, architect

Singer-Pentz Construction Company, builder

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other Name of repository:

Hippodrome Theater (B-2338)
Name of Property

Baltimore city, Maryland
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.35 acres Baltimore East quad

UTM References
(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 360160 4349980
Zone Easting Northing

2
Zone Easting Northing

3
Zone Easting Northing

4
Zone Easting Northing

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael V. Murphy, AIA

organization Murphy & Dittenhafer, Inc. date 9/10/99

street & number 800 North Charles Street telephone (410) 625-4823

city or town Baltimore state MD zip code 21201

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

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. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Description Summary

The Hippodrome Theater, constructed in 1914, is located on the west side of Eutaw Street in downtown Baltimore, Maryland, one property north of the principal commercial intersection of Eutaw and Baltimore streets. An important city landmark since 1914, The Hippodrome Theater is a significant architectural composition representing the grand style of American theaters of the early 20th century and the transition in theaters from live entertainment to motion pictures.

Famed theater architect Thomas Lamb (1871-1942) used ornamental brickwork and terracotta to frame a central motif on the Eutaw Street facade that created a powerful focal point along this urban streetscape. The overall composition demonstrates the symmetry, balance, and proportion associated with Neo-classical architecture, combined with a free use of texture and ornament characteristic of the architect's early eclectic style. On the interior, the theater's 2300-seat auditorium is a curvaceous composition of ovals, domes and coffers, which retains evidence of its original lavish decorative treatment in the baroque manner of the early 20th century.

General Description

The monumental east facade of the Hippodrome, fronting on Eutaw Street, is the primary exterior point of interest. The east facade treatment, which also returns around the north and south corners of the building, is a composition of brickwork and terra cotta which demonstrates a classically influenced tripartite composition including a base, mid-section, and ornamental top. The remaining exterior facades of the building, which face alleys on the south, west, and north, consist of ordinary dark brown brickwork punctuated by miscellaneous functional elements such as fire escapes in addition to doors and windows to back stage and other areas. While the east facade was carefully designed for its monumental effect, the other three exterior facades are simpler expressions of interior requirements.

The east facade is composed of a terra-cotta base at the sidewalk level which contains a central grouping of three arched openings forming the theater entrance. The original wood entrance doors with glass transoms have been removed, replaced by 1950s-vintage aluminum systems now covered with plywood. Embedded deep within the current fiberglass clad marquee, dating from the 1960s, are the remnants of the steelwork which supported the original glass and metal canopy which echoed the lines of the three entrance arches and was suspended from the facade by metal cables.

A projecting terra-cotta cornice caps the existing base. Rich texture is achieved in the mid-section through the use of projecting "cross" and "dot" beige brickwork laid out in a non-directional "diaper" pattern at either side of the framed central area. A rectangular frame of squares and diamond shapes surrounds a group of vertically stacked brick courses which create a Moorish, pointed-arch, effect. Substantial wooden window framing sub-divides the open areas within the arches that are further divided by a delicate pattern of wooden mullions. The existing windows reflect numerous later modifications to the original design. Two of the four original cast metal light standards still exist on the facade, although the original white globes are missing. At least two variations of a large, vertical, illuminated sign, attached to the facade and announcing "The Hippodrome," are known to have existed in the past, although none survives.

The east facade was originally crowned with a magnificent treatment consisting of a terracotta frieze, a projecting terra cotta cornice, and a terra cotta parapet. Although the cornice has been lost, leaving a remnant band of rubble brick, the original frieze is nearly complete in its original bas-relief form. The frieze is composed of an ornamental pattern including repeating putti holding a continuous floral swag, dramatic masks, and the lyre, a classical stringed instrument and symbol of the musical arts. The original parapet is clad in terra-cotta panels and copings.

The auditorium is dominated by a primarily rectilinear proscenium arch that formerly contained elaborate opera boxes on either side. Above the proscenium arch, a richly colored allegorical painting survives despite damage from water and age. The rich and exuberant design of the interior theater space originally featured a subdued palette of creams, tans, and browns accented with silver and gold (since painted over). Original architectural drawings stored at the Avery Library of Columbia University indicate that most changes to the interior have been cosmetic in nature, with the exception of the removal of the opera boxes and alterations to the lobby area.

The auditorium space, with its large balcony, is baroque in terms of its flowing space and eclectic in terms of its ornate plasterwork and other ornament. Curvilinear forms define the main components of the auditorium space including the balcony edge, the rear wall of the lobby, and the motifs of saucer domes and moldings in the main ceiling and the ceiling at the underside of the large balcony. The main theater ceiling and the underside of the balcony each contain a large central recessed oval area, which originally contained ornamental chandeliers, now loStreet These saucer domes are surrounded by ornamental mouldings and recessed curved panels. Ornamental bosses originally housed light fixtures, also removed. The concrete auditorium floor slopes gradually down to the edge of the stage through a series of risers. The former orchestra pit has been filled in with concrete.

Despite the effects of a series of cosmetic renovations between 1931 and 1962, and subsequent decay, the interior space retains sufficient integrity to reflect its former grandeur. The elaborate proscenium arch remains intact despite considerable plaster damage and several layers of paint. The central cartouche above the proscenium, incorporating the initials "H-T," also survives with some loss of ornament. The ornate proscenium boxes have been completely removed, leaving only a patchwork of remnant materials. While most of the original applied interior finishes have been removed, some visible remnants of the original pattern of framed wall fabric panels and "scagliola" faux-marble wainscoting survive. The seating currently in place dates from the 1950s. Other, more modern accommodations include a motion picture projection booth at the rear of the lower level and ceiling penetrations for a variety of mechanical and electrical devices.

The existing stage is approximately 80' wide, 30' deep and 60' high behind a 43' wide proscenium opening. On either side of the stage are areas for scenery and dressing rooms on several levels. Beneath the stage is a storage area, a boiler room, and former access to the orchestra pit. A fly gallery, with some rigging of an unknown date, exists above the stage area. The modest entry lobby from Eutaw Street provides an air-lock to the outside and a means of access to the balcony level from stairs that rise from the north and south ends of the lobby. The space was originally open to the auditorium; the curved wall which now defines the lobby was added at an unknown date. The current ceiling of the lobby space is a smooth plaster vault which is not believed to be original, as the original architectural drawings indicate a much more elaborate and flatter surface. The lobby currently has a vinyl tile floor and wood paneling from a later renovation. The ticket booth located in the lobby

is also not original. Restrooms are located off each stair at an intermediate level between the lobby and the balcony. Additional restrooms are located off the balcony level.

The roof of the building is a concrete slab covered with multiple-ply roofing. The basement of the building is confined to the stage area, in addition to ventilation tunnels which originally circulated chilled air from an ice storage room to vents under the theater seats.

Statement of Significance:

The Hippodrome Theater is significant in two areas. It is significant under Criterion A for its association with the Performing Arts and Entertainment in Baltimore. Opened in 1914, The Hippodrome Theater was the premiere vaudeville theater of Baltimore, was one of its first motion picture theaters, and is one of an increasingly small number of remaining buildings in the western area of downtown Baltimore which reflect the neighborhood's previous vitality as a commercial and entertainment center. The Hippodrome Theater reflects the era of live entertainment for the masses and the memories of its former glory are deeply imbedded in the fabric of local culture.

The Hippodrome Theater derives additional significance under Criterion C as an outstanding example of early twentieth century theater design. The work of Thomas Lamb (1871-1942), one of America's finest theater architects of the period, its design demonstrates a mastery of scale, proportion, and exterior and interior decoration and detailing which was outstanding in its day.

Resource History and Historic Context

Performing Arts and Entertainment on Baltimore's West Side, ca. 1870-1950s (Criterion A)

The west side of Baltimore thrived as a vibrant entertainment, retail, and financial district from the late nineteenth century through the 1950s. At the time of the Hippodrome's opening in 1914, the west side district was well established as a bustling entertainment center. A bird's eye view of the area shortly before 1912 indicates the density of pedestrian, electric streetcar, horse and buggy, and automobile traffic already present at the Hippodrome Theater site prior to the theater's construction. The neighborhood was densely populated with the garment trade, banks, department stores, hotels, and all manner of small shops to serve the urban population.

Earlier theaters such as Ford's Theater (1871), the Academy of Music (1875), and the Mayfair (1890) had already established the west side district as the center for live entertainment in Baltimore. At the turn of the century, theater construction quickened with the opening of Blaney's (1901), the Maryland (1903), and the Wizard (1904). In the period just before the construction of the Hippodrome, more new theaters had bloomed on the west side, including the Alcazar (1907), the Howard (1908), the Blue Mouse (1909), the Dixie (1909), the Lexington (1909) and the New (1910).

Marion Pierce and Phillip Scheck, local promoters and purveyors of motion picture equipment and supplies from their shop at 223 North Calvert Street, formed the Hippodrome Theater Company and obtained the future site of tile Hippodrome Theater by purchasing part of the former Eutaw House site in 1913. They commissioned Thomas Lamb to plan the most ambitious theater ever attempted in Baltimore. An advertisement from the theater's opening touts the Hippodrome Theater as "the largest theater South of Philadelphia."

Far from cornering the market for theater patrons upon its construction, the Hippodrome Theater had to compete with all of the theaters mentioned above in addition to a raft of new competitors, including Keith's

(1915), also designed by Thomas Lamb, and the Strand (1916). By 1920, the Hippodrome, the New, and Keith's were attracting over

30,000 customers per week to three daily performances. Initially operated by the Loew's organization, admission to the Hippodrome Theater was 10 cents in the afternoon and 25 cents in the evening. A typical program from 1915 included an orchestra performance followed by trapeze performers, "Thompson's Elephants," Barlow's Dog's and Ponies," "Webb's Seals," and "Arizona Days" featuring "America's greatest cowgirl rider, Adel Von Ohl."

By the 1920s, new west side theaters were being primarily designed for the motion pictures, including the Century (1921) and the Stanley (1927).

In 1917, the Loews organization began to lease the Hippodrome Theater and present "Supreme Vaudeville' and some films. By 1924, the Hippodrome Theater had become the second Keith vaudeville house in Baltimore, after the Maryland Theater. Isadore Rappaport, a Philadelphia theater operator newly arrived in Baltimore, leased the theater in 1921, and after renovating and installing a new marquee, it reopened with live shows and films. In 1941, Rappaport again remodeled, and added big bands to the program. A fire in 1951 closed the theater for several months, and the last stage show was presented in 1959. The theater was leased to Trans-Lux in 1962 and was renovated again in 1963 for the opening of "Cleopatra." In 1989, the doors were closed for the last time.

The Hippodrome Theater has occupied an important place in Baltimore's cultural life for several generations, and was certainly one of Baltimore's most elegant theaters in its heyday. The list of noted performers who graced the Hippodrome Theater stage is too long to recount, beginning with the stars of Vaudeville and later hosting such entertainment figures as George Jessel, Ethel Barrymore, Cab Calloway, Sophie Tucker, Benny Goodman, Guy Lombardo, Glenn Miller, Red Skelton, Danny Kaye, and many more. The Hippodrome Theater serves as an important cultural record of the crucial evolution from live vaudevillian performance to full length feature films that transformed popular entertainment in American society in the early 20th century.

Architectural Significance (Criterion C)

The Hippodrome Theater is a transitional piece in the career of its designer, Thomas Lamb, a nationally renowned master of theater architecture. Born in Scotland and without formal architectural training, Lamb began practicing architecture in New York City in 1892 after an apprenticeship as a building inspector, which involved him in the practical considerations of the theater construction. By the time he began working on the Hippodrome, Lamb had established a reputation as one of the nation's leading theater architects with such significant works in New York City as Morris' American (Roof) Theater (1909), Fox's City Theater (1910), The Minsky Theater (1912), Fox's Audubon (1912), and The Royal (1913), as well as numerous theaters in other cities including the Cort Theater, Montreal, and the Winter Garden, Toronto, both designed in 1913. Thomas Lamb's later work includes the Capitol and Zeigfield Theaters in New York, the Fox Theater in Philadelphia, and the Ohio Theater in Columbus. The Hippodrome Theater is one of Lamb's earliest known theaters as well as one of the last opulent designs from his early period. His later work evolved toward a simpler, more

"Adamesque" style. At least twelve of Lamb's theaters are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Work abroad included theaters in England, Australia, North Africa, India, and Egypt.

The exterior design of the Hippodrome Theater reflects the reality of the fierce competition which existed among downtown theaters for customers. Through a richly textured and sculptural facade design of brick and terra cotta, Lamb created a composition which was both inviting and exuberant. The exterior suggests the vitality waiting within, and establishes a strong presence at an otherwise difficult mid-block location. The interior more than lives up the promise of the facade by delivering a richly decorated and dynamic interior space, focused on the elaborate proscenium arch and stage.

The Hippodrome Theater has undergone numerous primarily cosmetic renovations during this century, but nevertheless retains sufficient integrity of design, materials, location, feeling, and association to represent the tradition of Vaudeville theater and the transition to modern cinema in American culture. The Hippodrome Theater also stands as a prominent Baltimore landmark, a place where at least three generations of Baltimoreans have come for entertainment. Significantly, of the more than thirty major theaters which once thrived on Baltimore's west side, only three remain, including the Hippodrome, the Town on Fayette Street, and the Mayfair on Howard Street. The Hippodrome Theater is the largest, the most ornate, and the most intact of these three.

Major Bibliographical References

Dorsey, John and James D. Dilts. A Guide to Baltimore Architecture. Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1997.

Headley, Robert K., Jr. Exit: A History of Movies in Baltimore. Baltimore: by the author, 1974.

Jones, Carleton. Lost Baltimore: A Portfolio of Vanished Buildings. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Kidney, Walter C. The Architecture of Choice: Eclecticism in America, 1880-1930. New York: George Braziller, 1974.

Olson, Sherry H. Baltimore: The Building of an American City. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

Hillary Russell, "An Architect's Progress: Thomas White Lamb," Marquee: The Journal of the Theater Historical Society of America, v. 21, 1989.

Thomas Lamb Collection, Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University, New York, N. Y.

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, Maryland Historical Trust, Crownsville, MD

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated property is described as Ward 4, Section 8, Block 631, Lot 17 among the Land Records of Baltimore City.

Boundary Justification:

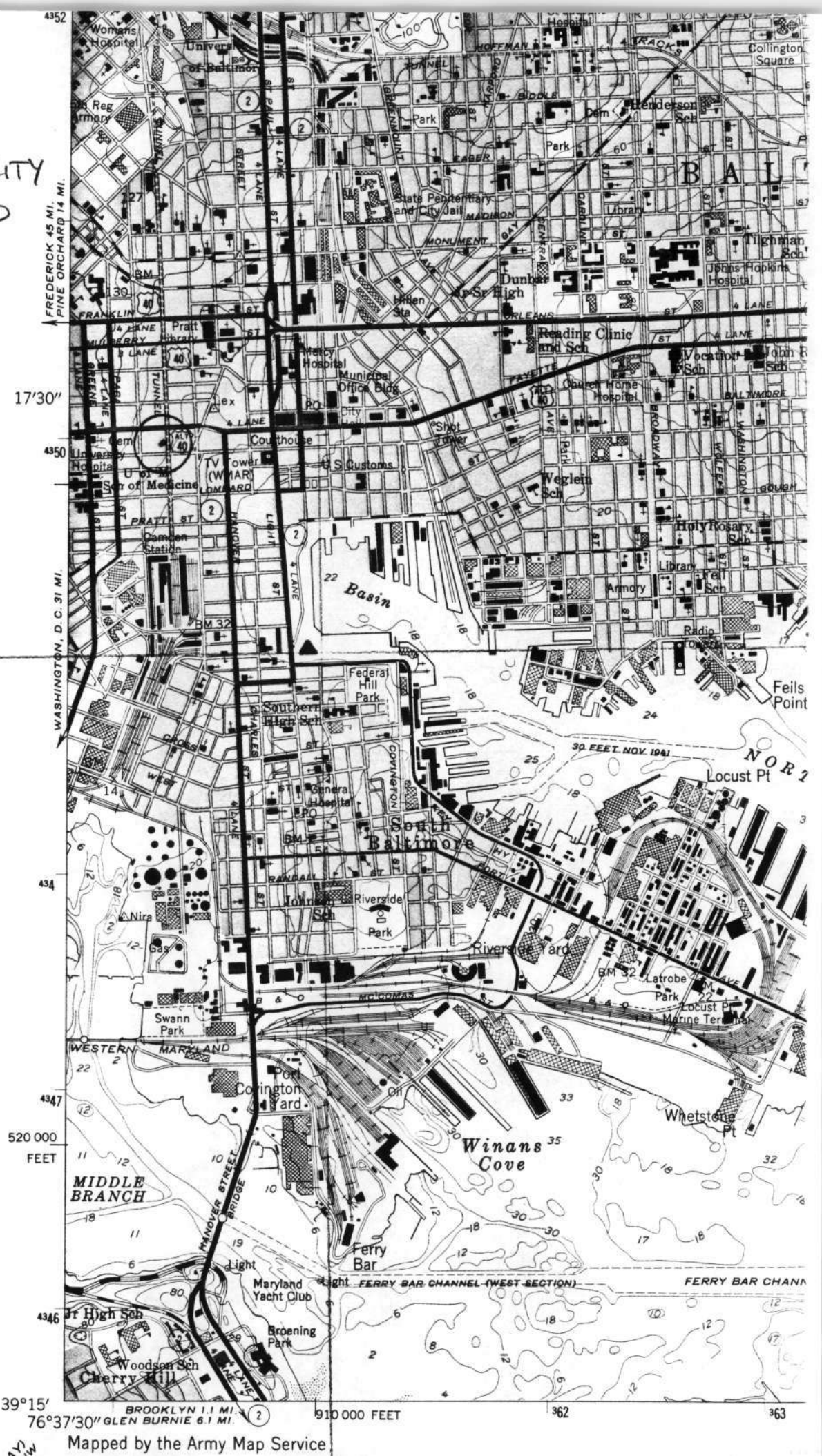
The selected boundaries encompass the entire parcel historically associated with the Hippodrome Theater.

B-2338

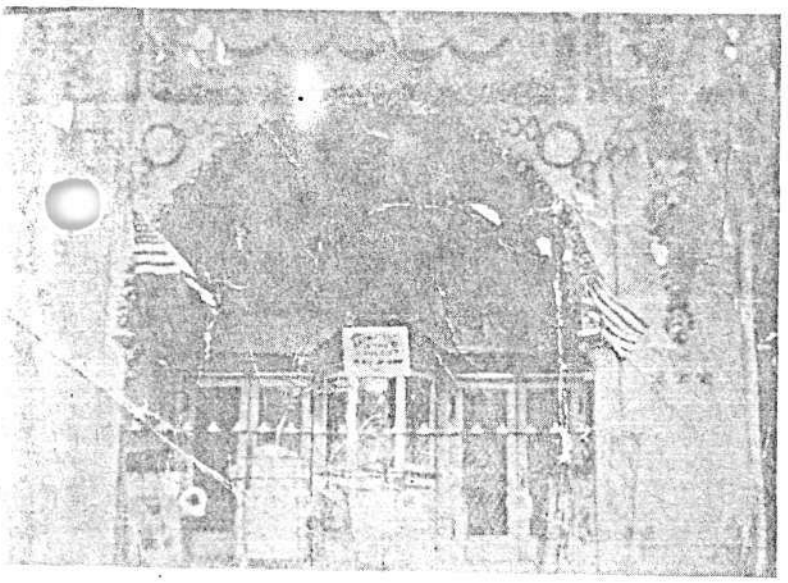
HIPPODROME THEATER

BALTIMORE CITY MARYLAND

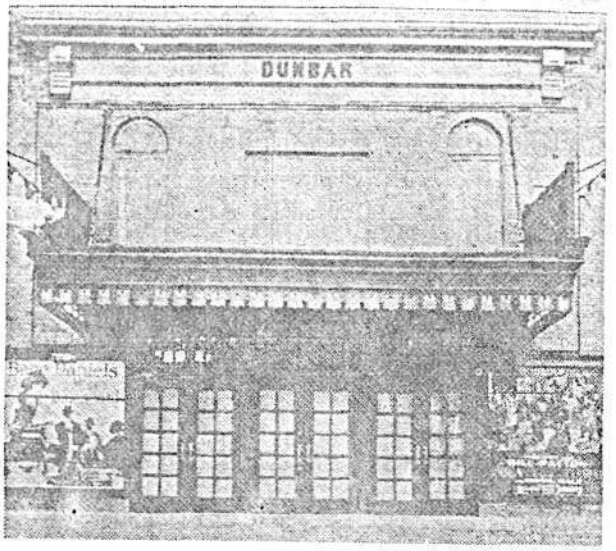
18-360160-4349980



Mapped by the Army Map Service

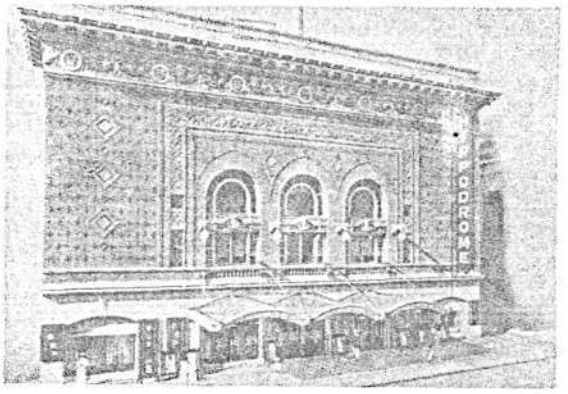


FAIRYLAND (?)



DUNBAR (1928)

ROSLYN (ca. 1950)



HIPPODROME (1914)

AVENUE/GOOD TIME (1951)

RITZ (1951)

TIMES/CHARLES (ca. 1950)

Exit: A History of Movies in Baltimore

Plate 23

B-2338

HIPPODROME
HIPPODROME

#1

B-2338

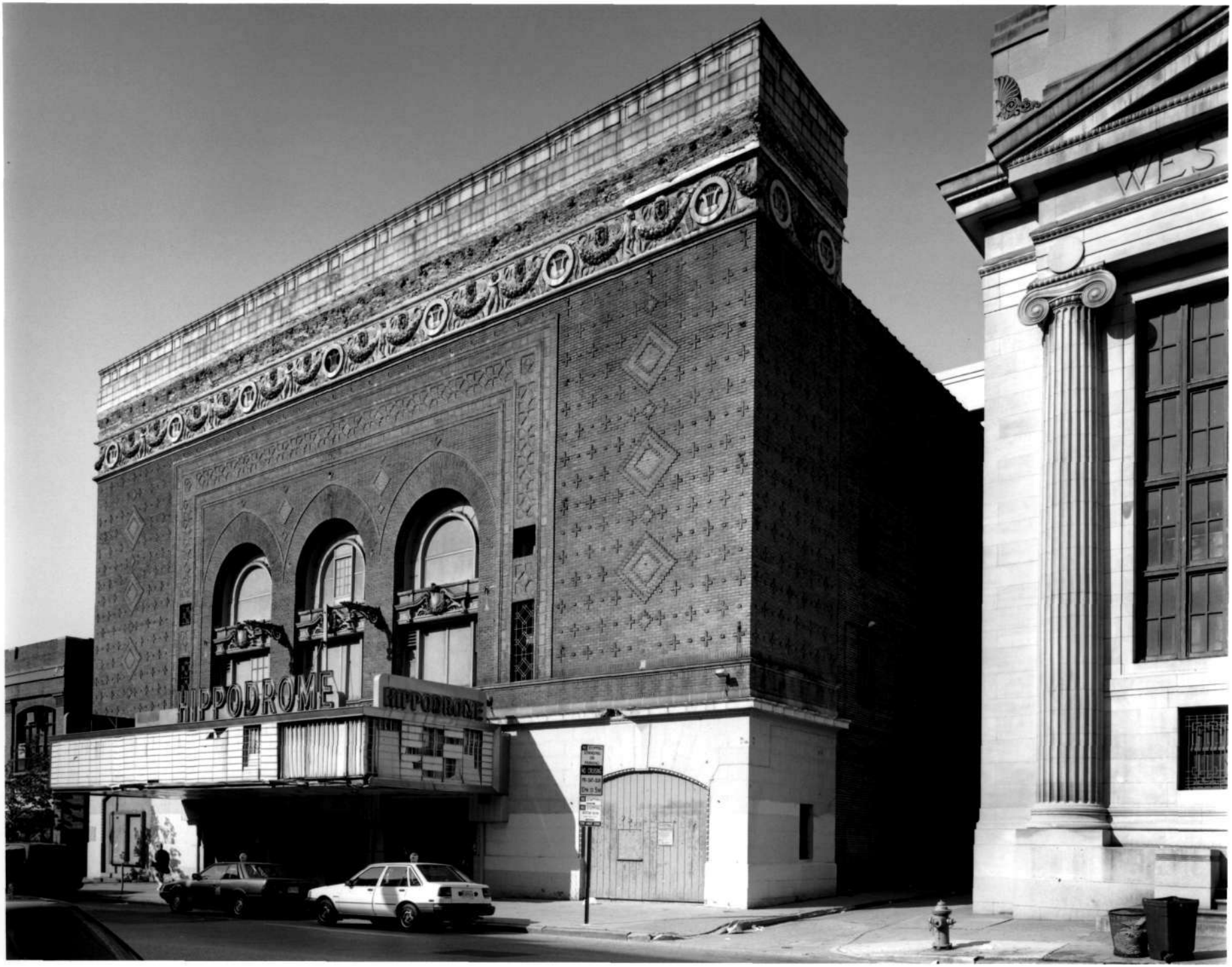
HIPPODROME - BALTIMORE, MD.
P = ALAIN JARAMILLO, 1996
EUTAW ST LOOKING N-W

HIPPODROME

B-2338

#2

HIPPODROME - BALTIMORE, MD
P= ALAIN JARAMILLO, 1998
EXTERIOR
FACADE
LOOKING
WEST


HIPPODROME
HIPPODROME
WES

B-2338

#3

HIPPODROME - BALTIMORE MD
P= ALAIN JARAMILLO, 1990
ANKY, FACADE *
LOOKING ~~NE~~ S-W.

PRIVATE
PROPERTY
GREENWOOD TOWING
1370 W. NORTH AVENUE
669-1661

B-2338

#4

HIPPODROME - BALTIMORE, MD.
P= ALAIN JARAMILLO, 1998

WEST AND
SOUTH
FACADE
LOOKING
EAST

B-2338

#5 HIPPODROME - BALTIMORE, MD
P= ALAIN JARAMILLO - 1998

NORTH AND
WEST
FACADES
LOOKING
EAST

B-2338

#6 HIPPODROME - BALTIMORE, MD

P= ALAIN JARAMILLO 1998

INTERIOR OF LOBBY LOOKING SOUTH

B-2338

#6-A HIPPODROME - BALTIMORE, MD
P = ALAIN JARAMILLO - 1998

ORCHESTRA
LEVEL
LOOKING WEST

B-2338

#1 HIPPODROME - BALTIMORE, MD

P= ALAIN JARAMILLO - 1998

THEATER
INTERIOR

LOOKING WEST

B-2338

#8 HIPPODROME - BALTIMORE - MD

P = ALAIN JARAMILLO - 1998

BALCONY LEVEL

LOOKING WEST

Mens Room

B-2338

9 HIPPODROME - BALTIMORE, MD.

P= ALAIN JARAMILLO 1998

~~BALCO~~

LOBBY

LOOKING SOUTH AT

STAIR TO BALCONY

B-2338

10 HIPPODROME - BALTIMORE, MD

P = ALAIN JARAMILLO, 1998

STAIR TO BALCONY, -

ABOVE FIRST LANDING