

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 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 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**

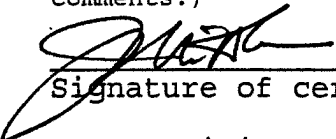
historical name Churchill Theatre; Community Building  
other names/site number Church Hill Theatre (preferred); OA-457

**2. Location**

street Maryland Route 19  
not for publication n/a city or town Church Hill vicinity n/a  
state Maryland code MD county Queen Anne's code 035 zip code 21617

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide x locally. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



Signature of certifying official

8-3-10

Date

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau



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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: SOCIAL Sub: meeting hall  
RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: theatre

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: theatre

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete block  
 roof Asphalt  
 walls Stucco  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

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

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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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.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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)

ARCHITECTURE  
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance 1929-1944

Significant Dates 1929; 1944

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder Elwood F. Coleman, architect and builder

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

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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(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:

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property less than one acre

USGS quadrangle Church Hill, MD

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	<u>18</u>	<u>414880</u>	<u>4332770</u>	C	_____	_____
B	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____
	_____ See continuation sheet.					

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**11. Form Prepared By**  
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name/title Michael O. Bourne and Peter E. Kurtze  
organization Maryland Historical Trust date August 1983; September 1999  
street & number 100 Community Place, 3rd floor telephone (410) 514-7600  
city or town Crownsville state MD zip code 21032-2023  
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**Additional Documentation**  
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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)

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

name \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_  
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**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 the 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 Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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QA-457  
Churchill Theatre  
Queen Anne's County, MD

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Description Summary

Church Hill Theatre is a large stucco building located on the north side of Maryland Route 19, two doors east of its intersection with old Rt. 213 in the town of Church Hill, Maryland. It was constructed in 1929 by the town government as a community hall, and was first used as a movie theatre in 1936. The present Art Deco entrance and interior features were installed after a fire in 1944.

General Description

The building stands two stories high, resting on a rusticated block basement. The façade is three bays wide, and is brick on the first story. The central bay is defined by a wide arch holding a box office, flanked on either side by double doors and surmounted by a marquee. Small storefronts flank the central bay. The three bays of the stucco upper story are defined by paired six-over-six windows. A parapet holds a faded plaque reading "Community Building," and conceals the low pitched A roof.

The building reflects Art Deco influence in the elements of its façade. The first floor is treated in brick to create the effect of pilasters separating the bays. A glass-block box office is flanked by sets of double doors with glazed semicircular cutouts. This treatment, however restrained, marks the only instance of Art Deco design in Queen Anne's County.

Flanking the central entrance bay are two storefronts, each with a store window and glazed door. The store windows have four large panes with a 12-pane transom above. On the left side the transom bore a sign reading "Town Office . . . etc."

The two side walls are similar to each other, with two exits flanking three windows on the first floor and three windows on the second story. There are two basement windows and a window for the shops and one for the stage area. On the western side there is an exit from the second story or balcony with iron fire escape. There is also a window for the kitchen. The eastern side has no exit from the balcony and has a door at the end on grade for access to the basement. The back of the building has two stage windows and two basement windows.

The interior is actually on three levels, plus the stage and balcony. At grade is the box office and vestibule. Flanking it are the two storefronts, formerly used for town offices on the west and refreshments on the east.

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From the vestibule there are steps up to the theatre doors, which are grained. At this upper level on the east is a door to the basement stairs.

The theatre itself is a large space defined on the exterior by the two stories of windows (not seen from within). There is a corridor across the back to the exits and two aisles flanking the central tier of seats. The side seats have fewer seats per row. The front of the theatre is curved to the stage. In the curved front walls are openings to the exits and back stage areas. The stage itself projects by about a foot. A projection screen hangs midway on the stage.

The walls of the theatre are finished with heavy Art Deco fabric above the dado. The ceiling is on three levels, with the center and outer edges covered in acoustical tile and the center strip painted. Where these levels change is a painted trompe l'oeil motif. The wall lights are half cylinders hung horizontally. The ends of the seats have an Art Deco motif.

Located on the eastern end of the back corridor is a stair to the balcony. The balcony is located above the vestibule and flanking shops. On the east side of the projection room are two lavatories (added in the 1950s) and on the west is a seating area. The seats on the balcony appear to have original painted ends. There were two seating areas prior to the insertion of the lavatories and anyone in need had to use the necessary on the west side of the building.

Beneath the theatre is a large basement with low head-room. Beneath the stage is a kitchen with higher ceiling where community dinners used to be prepared. There is also a furnace in the corner of the kitchen. Stairs to the back entrance are in the back east corner.



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Significance Summary

The Church Hill Theatre is significant under Criterion C for its architectural character. The façade and the interior feature restrained Art Deco treatments, representing the only instance of the style in largely-rural Queen Anne's County. The building derives additional significance under Criterion A as a center of community life and recreation. It was constructed by the town in 1929 as a community building, and served as the venue for a wide variety of community events including suppers, graduations, etc. It was first used as a movie theatre in 1935, and continued to serve that purpose until 1982. It remains the only existing movie theatre of the period in Queen Anne's County, the Centreville theatre having burned in the early 1960s.

Resource History

The Church Hill Theatre<sup>1</sup> occupies the main floor of the Community Building in the town of Church Hill, Queen Anne's County, Maryland.

The building was completed and dedicated in the Fall of 1929 after a July 1927 fire destroyed the earlier town hall. Architect and builder of the building was Elwood F. Coleman, of Crumpton, Maryland.

The building has been used for a variety of activities over the years, including town meetings, card parties, dances, plays, talent shows, Chatauqua appearances, minstrel shows and high school graduations; and, on the lower level, public suppers.

Permanent, fixed seating was installed on the main floor in 1932; and, in that year, Church Hill High School held its graduation exercises there for the first time.

The community had come to rely on the building for a variety of functions, and the conversion to movie use in December 1935 caused some disruption in the expected order of things. The students of Church Hill High School

. . . were all excited in planning for their junior-senior party which was to be held around Christmas in the basement of the community

<sup>1</sup> This name reflects present usage, and is preferred; note, however, that throughout the building's use as a movie theatre, the name was spelled "Churchill," as on the marquee.

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building . . . but were disappointed when Mr. Merrick brought the news that . . . the hall will be engaged for moving pictures.<sup>2</sup>

The first movie, "Steamboat Round the Bend," starring Will Rogers, was shown on December 30, 1935. The first newspaper advertisement ran the following week; "the friendly theatre" promised "always a good show," with two shows every night and the feature changing every third day.<sup>3</sup> Within a short time, the theatre began to attract patrons from the surrounding region, and the local paper observed that "Church Hill people, as well as those from distances, are enjoying the interesting movies being shown."<sup>4</sup>

A fire in the projection room severely damaged the theatre in May, 1944. While the Church Hill Fire Company, located across the street, was able to save the building from total destruction, the damage was extensive:

The balcony was burned very badly and will have to be replaced, while the interior burned all around the four walls completely destroying the sound matting. All curtains and equipment on the stage was destroyed. The seats throughout the theatre were all severely burned and the office was also ruined.<sup>5</sup>

While it was initially anticipated that the theatre would reopen within four to six weeks, it remained closed until October. In addition to repairing the fire damage, the owners apparently took the opportunity to bring the exterior appearance more up to date. The present Art Deco character of the theatre dates from the 1944 rebuilding. The local newspaper described the work, and offered the public reassurance that appropriate precautions had been taken against future conflagration:

. . . The theatre has been completely redecorated inside and out and is judged the finest and the most modern on the Del-Mar-Va Peninsula by those who have seen it.

The interior has been equipped with new comfortable leather cushion chairs which will make relaxation complete. New side wall and ceiling decorations have been beautifully arranged by the Paramount Decorating Company and will make the sound pleasant while enjoying a show. The stage has been completely remodeled with new equipment and curtains. The balconies have been refinihsed and a comfortable ladies

<sup>2</sup> Queen Anne's Record, Centreville, Maryland, December 12, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> Queen Anne's Record, Centreville, Maryland, January 2, 1936.

<sup>4</sup> Queen Anne's Record, Centreville, Maryland, February 27, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> Queen Anne's Record-Observer, Centreville, Maryland, May 11, 1944.

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rest room has been added on the second floor. For the safety of patrons, three additional exits have been added and all decorating and sound-proofing materials are fireproofed.

In true theatre style a marquee has been added in front of the theatre outside and a modernistic lighted glass ticket box now graces the center of the entrance.

The lighting arrangement, inside and out, has been skillfully placed to give the movie goer a thrill as he enters and while enjoying a show.

The screen, projecting and sound equipment recently installed are the finest money can buy. This fine equipment will give the public excellent reproduction of the pictures and sound that is clear as a bell.<sup>6</sup>

The first operators of the Churchill Theatre were Chick Winfield and Freddy Klein, of Washington, D.C.; the projectionist was Paul Rose, Sr. In 1957 or 1958, C. E. Prince, of Chestertown, took over the theatre operation under a lease with The Town Commissioners of Church Hill.

The building continued to operate as a movie theatre until about 1982, after which it became disused. In early 1985, Friends For Church Hill Preservation, Inc., acquired the building, to save it from demolition by the Town Commissioners, and began presenting a varied program of live performances and classic movies.

Access to both levels for the handicapped was made available in 1986 under a HUD grant. Use of the lower level is restricted at the present time, since there is no sprinkler system. This level is used for theatre board meetings and dressing rooms for theatrical performances.

<sup>6</sup> Queen Anne's Record-Observer, Centreville, Maryland, October 26, 1944.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See footnotes

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

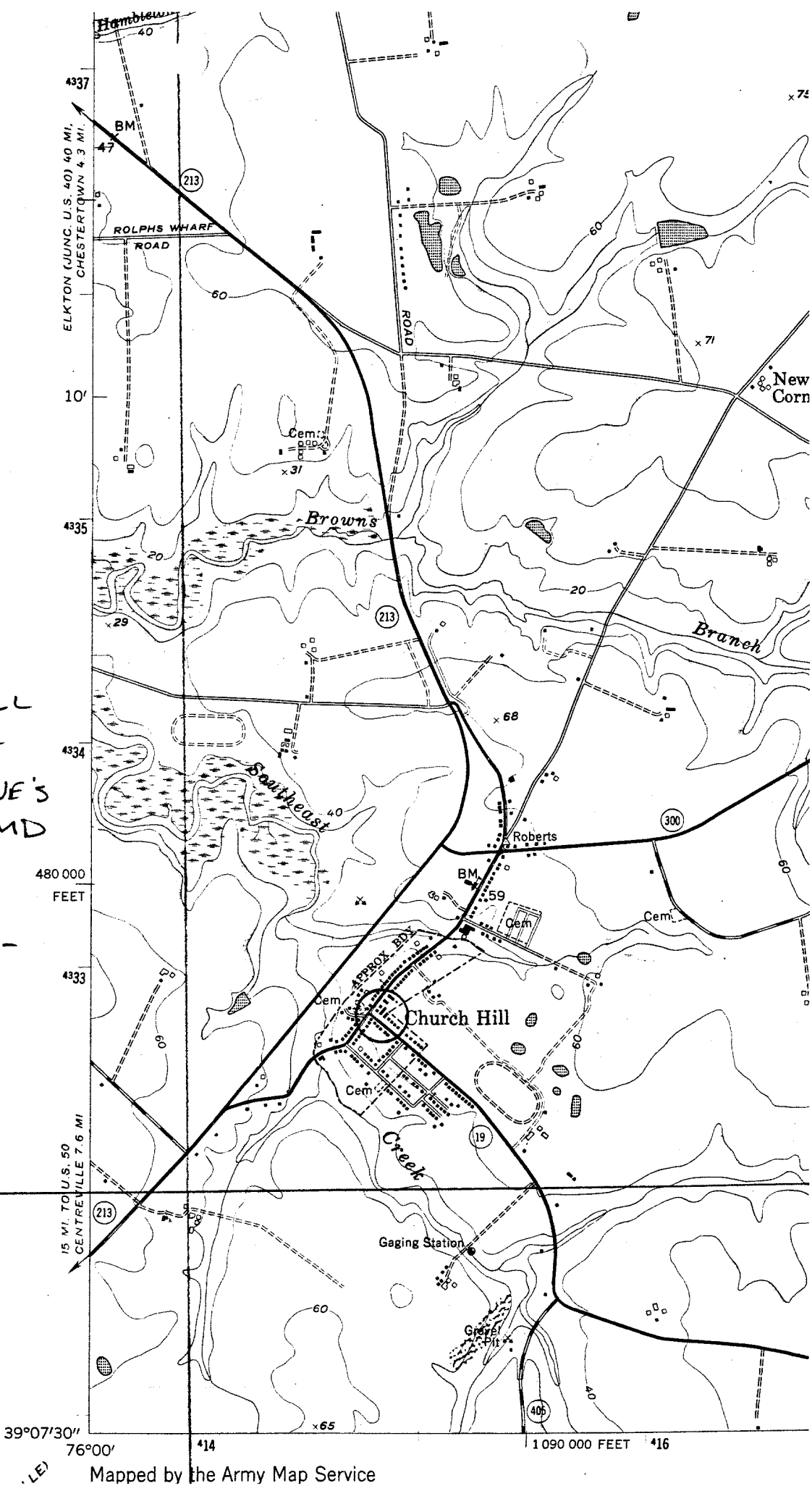
Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated property is described in Liber  
MMM 227, folio 393, among the land records of Queen Anne's County.

Boundary Justification: The nominated property comprises the entire parcel  
historically associated with the resource.

QA-457

CHURCH HILL  
THEATRE  
QUEEN ANNE'S  
COUNTY, MD

18-414880-  
4332770





QA-457

CHURCH HILL THEATRE

Church Hill Theatre

Queen Anne's Co., MD

Peter Kurtze 9/1999

Negative at MD SAPO

Facade

#1 of 2

*HOUSE OF HITS*

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Church Hill Theatre

Queen Anne's Co., MD

Peter Kurtze 9/1999

Negative at MD SHPO

Entrance detail

#2 of 2