NPS Form 10-900
(3-82)

Survey Book

Easement

OMB No. 1024-0018
Expires 10-31-87

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

B-106

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic: Baltimore Music Hall, Music Hall

and or common: Lyric Theatre (preferred)

2. Location

street & number: 124 West Mount Royal Avenue — N/A not for publication

city, town: Baltimore — N/A vicinity of — Seventh Congressional District

state: Maryland — code: 24 — county: independent city — code: 510

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	X occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
X building(s)	X private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	X entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	X yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
	X not applicable	___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name: The Lyric Foundation

street & number: 1304 St. Paul Street

city, town: Baltimore — N/A vicinity of — state: Maryland 21201

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.: Baltimore City Courthouse

street & number: 100 North Calvert Street

city, town: Baltimore — state: Maryland 21202

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title: Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Inventory — has this property been determined eligible? X yes ___ no

date: 1984 — ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records: 21 State Circle

city, town: Annapolis — state: Maryland 21401

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
X excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	X original site
___ good	___ ruins	X altered	___ moved date N/A
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Number of Resources Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of previously listed National Register properties included in this nomination: 0

Original and historic functions and uses: entertainment

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

The Lyric Theatre is a large rectangular shaped gable roofed brick structure built in 1893-1894 to which a sizable brick addition in modern design was made to the front and south in 1981. The original building is red brick and the new tan brick. Three of the original elevations remain exposed (north, south, and east) but only the east or Maryland Avenue elevation remains fully exposed. This elevation is decorated in a Renaissance Revival manner with rustication on the lower levels and pilasters supporting an entablature with dentilled cornice above. The historic interior spaces consist primarily of the auditorium and the original lobby, labeled foyer in the enclosed floor plan. These spaces remain fairly intact in decorative detailing to the earliest period. The decorative detailing is classical in influence. The lobby is marked by paneled pilasters with Corinthian capitals, arched pedimented doorways, and dentilled cornices. The doors are new. The auditorium is lavishly decorated with paired flat pilasters, round keystone arches with decorative panels inscribed with the names of composers, a heavy modillioned and dentilled cornice below a cove pierced with round windows and a beamed ceiling. The intrados and extrados of the proscenium arch are beaded moldings flanking a cove decorated with gold leafed designs. The proscenium arch is detailed at the center with a cartouche decorated with the Calvert family coat-of-arms, a knight's armor, and musical instruments. The spandrels have winged figures. The balcony which runs along three sides is defined by a pierced balustrade with wing figures as newels. The present arrangement of seats and boxes, floor and base of the stage date from the 1980s renovations. In 1928 the balcony was expanded to the west into an area that was originally a small theater.

For General Description, see Continuation Sheet No. 1

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The Lyric Theatre is a rectangular brick building with a moderately sloped gable roof, the ridge following the longitudinal axis of the auditorium within. Of the original proncipal facades, only the one facing Maryland Avenue, at the rear of the stage, was completed to its intended design. That facade is constructed of red brick, with its four visual stories, as represented by tiers of windows, divided into a base and piano nobile surmounted by a gabled attic facade. In that this is a rear stage wall, the windows have no correspondence to internal story divisions. In the two-story base, the brick is coursed to recall rusticated ashlar. At the ground story there are three large rectangular windows in the central bays and round-headed doorways in the outer two bays on each side. The second story contains seven arched openings, one in each bay. All are glazed except the central one - an elevated loading door at the level of the stage. The two-story piano nobile is articulated into seven bays by shallow brick pilasters resting on a red terra cotta belt course atop the pseudo-rusticated base. The pilasters have bases and Corinthian capitals of red terra cotta and support an entablature with a brick frieze and pressed sheet metal architrave and denticulated cornice. The central three bays are defined by paired pilasters, the others by single ones. The central five bays contain two tiers of wide rectangular windows; the outer bays being visually strengthened by smaller windows and relatively larger brick massing. All windows are of the single-light, double-hung type, constructed of wood and framed by wooden mullions and transom bars. With the exception of the fourth level, all have transom lights. The attic facade is marked, immediately above the cornice, by a row of seven round windows and, higher, by a semi-circular louvered ventilator. The facade is capped by a prominent pressed metal coping.

The side elevations, always foreseen to be obscured by adjoining buildings, are of red brick with simple fenestration.

The main front of the Lyric, on Mount Royal Avenue, was intended to be developed as a semi-circular lobby and stairway, with a highly embellished facade. A monument to unrealizable ambition, this treatment was never completed, although a small return of the proposed facade was applied to a portion of the south side of the building. As constructed, the Mount Royal facade was a blank brick wall, intended eventually to be encased as an internal element. The encasement occurred in 1981, when a lobby wing providing the function, if not the design, of the intended original was built. The 1981 lobby and a contemporary stage extension are considered to be not contributory to the historic character of the Lyric, the historic portion being bounded by the outer faces of the original exterior walls.

See Continuation Sheet No. 2

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

The principal historic interior spaces are the inner foyer and the auditorium. Several spaces under the auditorium and stage retain certain of their original features, but, as service spaces, have been, and will continue to be, altered to suit the changing support requirements of the theatre's productions. After passing through the 1981 lobby, one enters the historic Lyric through its original foyer. This space is approximately 30 by 40 feet in dimension, with a relatively low, flat ceiling. Its Renaissance styling is consistent with the rest of the building. Each of the walls is divided by Corinthian pilasters into three bays. Each bay contains a blind arch, each arch, in turn, framing a doorway. At the ends, the doors are simply framed and multiple, constituting the principal entry to the auditorium. The side arches contain single blind doorways with frames surmounted by handsome scrolled pediments. The foyer ceiling is surrounded by a simple entablature with dentil cornice. The frieze and cornice elements ornament two transverse beams that span the room.

The auditorium, entered directly from the inner foyer, is a rectangular room with approximate dimensions of 103 feet in width, 113 feet in length at the level of the main room, and 57 feet in height. At the balcony level the length was extended to 156 feet in 1928. With the exception of a wide ceiling cove and a moderately sloping floor, all surfaces are planar and parallel, a fact that is critical to the acoustical character of the hall. The room is essentially in original condition, although some alterations were made over time, the most comprehensive having occurred in 1928. The present color scheme is the result of the 1981 restoration research.

Like the rest of the building, the auditorium is in the Renaissance style. Its rectilinear volume is divided horizontally by a balcony that extends around the sides and rear. The side balcony depth is consistent, and the railings, cast iron grillages, of double-curved profile, embellished with elaborately modeled angel figures in full relief, are straight. The walls below the balcony are unornamented. A row of new (1981) parquet boxes along each side recalls the bowed railings of the original under-balcony seats, while providing necessary accommodation for emergency egress. The present arrangement of seats and rows is a result of the 1981 renovation. The pattern of the box seats evokes the original arrangement of box seating.

Above the balcony each side wall is divided by paired Corinthian pilasters into seven bays. Within the central five bays are large arches, each containing a hooded rectangular window. The tympanum above each window contains a painted decoration, probably dating from the 1928 renovation, in which the name of a major composer is surrounded by scrolls and rampant lions. The end bays are simpler in design, with two tiers of rectangular panels, the upper one containing painted decoration. The panels are separated by a horizontal molding which passes continuously around the auditorium forming the bottom edges of the window

See Continuation Sheet No. 3

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

tympani and the springs of the window arches while passing, visually, behind the pairs of pilasters.

The panelled end bays occur again at either side of the proscenium wall, where they flank the wide elliptical arch of the stage opening, being separated from it by additional paired pilasters. The spandrels above the proscenium arch are ornamented with large, delicately modeled reclining angels in low relief. The arch is bounded by an ornamented cove with bears, at its apex, an elaborate applied relief of the Calvert coat of arms. The room is surrounded by an entablature with a modillion cornice, supported by the pilasters on front and side walls.

Above the cornice is a wide ceiling cove, penetrated over each window by a vaulted lunette containing a central bullseye vent grille. Above the stage is a matching series of five recessed lunettes. The main portion of the ceiling is flat and is divided into thirty square panels by a grid of projecting beams. The original rear wall, entablature, and ceiling cove were removed in 1928, when the balcony was extended. The rear balcony area is very simply treated, but with a ceiling similar to that in the main portion of the auditorium.

The stage is 39 feet deep and extends the full width of the auditorium, with a 67-foot proscenium opening. An original permanent elliptical stage enclosure, containing a large pipe organ, has long been removed in order that the stage can accommodate a full range of program types. A remnant of that construction is a single ornamental window frame on the rear wall of the stage.

Under the stage area at ground level along Maryland Avenue is a large room finished with 1890s period architrave molding. This room at one time was a commercial shop space. Flanking this room are halls and staircases leading from the auditorium to Maryland Avenue. These spaces are also decorated with 1890s architrave moldings.

In all, the historic portion of the Lyric Theatre presents a simple, but unified and distinguished approach to the design of a major theatre, and one that remains largely intact despite almost a century of varied use.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	X architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	X music	X theater
X 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
X 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates 1894 (opened) **~~Builder~~/Architect** T. Henry Randall, architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Applicable Criteria: A, C
Applicable Exceptions: none
Significance Evaluated: local

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Lyric Theatre has architectural significance on the basis of its outstanding interior, with its artistic decoration evoking a European music hall of the late 19th century, its classically derived detailing, and its acoustically sound design. The interior space and architectural features, little altered since the enlargement to the rear balcony in 1928, retain both historic character and integrity. The Lyric Theatre is also historically significant under Criterion A for its association with the cultural development of the City of Baltimore around the turn of the 20th century as the center for major concerts and other musical and cultural performances throughout the years of its continuous use as a music hall. The building was recently altered by a major addition to the front facade. This addition does not detract from the building's primary architectural significance because it does not intrude upon the auditorium's spacial and design qualities.

For History and Supporting Documentation, see Continuation Sheet No. 4

HISTORY AND SUPPORT:

The destruction by fire of the Concordia Opera House left Baltimore without a hall for large functions. The only remaining suitable building, the Academy of Music, was busy and unavailable for evening bookings, forcing the use of the Fifth Regiment Armory for large public gatherings. To act toward filling the void in the city's cultural facilities, the Auditorium Company of Baltimore was conceived in November, 1891, at a meeting between Frank Frick, president of the Baltimore Board of Trade, and Ernest G. Knabe, a prominent piano manufacturer. Additional original incorporators and associates were Captain Frederick M. Colson, one of the city's most dedicated music lovers and enthusiasts; Fred H. Gottlieb, one of Baltimore's leading amateur musicians; Bernard N. Baker, president of Baker, Whitely Coal Company; R. C. Davidson, former mayor of Baltimore and president of the Mercantile Guarantee and Trust Company; William Graham Bowdoin, partner in the banking firm of Alexander Brown & Sons and a trustee of Johns Hopkins University; David L. Bartlett, owner of Bartlett, Hayward & Co., the largest iron foundry and machine shop in Baltimore; Julian LeRoy White; Richard S. Albert, a lawyer; and Alexander Frank, of Frank, Rosenburg & Company, bankers. The Company determined to raise $250,000 by subscription, but times were hard, and by April, 1893, with only $150,000 in hand, construction was begun.

Selection of an architect was made by competition, the entries judged by Richard Morris Hunt, one of America's most prominent architects. With the exception of the distinguished New York firm of Carrere & Hastings, the list of competitors is not known. The winner was the New York firm of Griffin & Randall, T. Henry Randall being the designer. A native of Annapolis, Maryland, Randall had studied at Johns Hopkins, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Ecole des Beaux Arts. He began work as a draftsman in the office of Henry Hobson Richardson, and was later employed by the leading New York firm of McKim, Mead, and White. In 1890, Randall opened his own office, specializing in the design of country estates, although he also designed Science Hall at St. John's College, in Annapolis. He is not known to have designed any other theaters. Randall died in 1905 at the untimely age of 40.

Ground for the Music Hall was broken during the summer of 1893 and the cornerstone was laid by Mr. Frick on September 22. At its opening, the theatre had cost 225,000, but it was not complete. An ambitious semi-circular lobby with an elaborate Baroque facade and an extraordinary interior grand stairway, as well as a rich decorative scheme for the auditorium, awaited the raising of additional monies. This did not occur, and it was almost a century later that adequate audience facilities were constructed.

See Continuation Sheet No. 5

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

The Music Hall opened on October 31, 1894, with a gala concert by the Boston Symphony, directed by Emil Paur. The program consisted of the Prelude to Wagner's "Die Meistersinger;" the Prelude to Act II of Chabrier's "Gwendoline;" the Scherzo March, and Wedding March from Mendelssohn's "A Midsummer Night's Dream;" and Brahms' "Academic Festival Overture." In addition, there were several vocal solos, Handel's aria, "Sweet Bird;" Arditi's waltz, "Se Saran Rose;" an aria from Verdi's "Don Carlos;" the Schumann song, "The Two Grenadiers;" the Romance from "Mignon," by Thomas; and "Chi Faro," from Gluck's "Orpheus." The soloists were Nellie Melba, soprano; Sofia Scalchi, alto; M. Mangieri, tenor; and Pol Plancon, bass. In conclusion, the soloists joined in a performance of the Quartet from Verdi's "Rigoletto."

The Music Hall was Baltimore's grand showcase for operatic, orchestral, and band presentations, and operated at the artistic level of such famous theaters as the Academy of Music, in Philadelphia, and Carnegi Hall, New York. Leading performers who appeared there over the years have included singers Enrico Caruso, whose performance of "Martha" was attended by Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Ernestine Schmann-Heink, Lotte Lehmann, Geraldine Farrar, Mary Garden, Antonio Scotti, John McCormack, Giovanni Martinelli, Jussi Bjoerling, Lauritz Melchior, Lawrence Tibbet, Feodor Chaliapin, and Kirsten Flagstad. Many of these individuals appeared as cast members of the Metropolitan and Hammerstein Opera Companies, both of which visited the Lyric regularly. Instrumental virtuosi have included Ignace Jan Paderewski, Josef Hofmann, Fritz Kreisler, Jascha Heifetz, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Artur Rubinstein, Richard Strauss, Yehudi Menhuin, Efrim Zimbalist, Joseph Szigetti, Nathan Milstein, Isaac Stern, Van Cliburn, Sviatoslav Richter, and Andres Segovia. These muscians appeared either as recitalists or as soloists with such orchestras as the Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, New York, and Moscow syphhonies, all of which have appeared at the Lyric, as have the Metropolitan, Hammerstein, and Chicago Opera Companies, the Ballet Russe and American Ballet Theatre, and the bands of Santelmann, Godfrey, and John Philip Sousa.

In its early years, as the Music Hall, the Lyric, like large theatres in other cities, hosted a variety of nonmusical entertainments ranging from Indian fakirs to a "grand bicycle festival." In 1905, the Lyric saw a boxing match between Mike Sullivan and Joe Gans, the great Black lightweight champion (it ended in a draw), as well as the first demonstration before a Baltimore audience of cooking by electricity. During the following decades, other performers have included lecturers William Jennings Bryan, Roald Amundsen, Richard Byrd, Charles Lindberg, Calvin Coolidge, Aimee Semple MacPherson, Will Rogers, and Clarence Darrow. There was even a world championship wrestling match between "Americus" (Gus Schoenlein) and the champion George Hackenschmidt. Several

See Continuation Sheet No. 6

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

years later, Schoenlein became a promoter and financial contributor to the effort to save the Lyric from becoming an automobile garage.

From the beginning the Music Hall had financial difficulties. It was rescued from bankruptcy in 1903 and again in 1906 by several of its original incorporators. In 1908, it figured in two famous theatrical wars. Oscar Hammerstein, an independent theatrical entrepreneur who was competing fiercely, and successfully, with the Metropolitan Opera, had built opera houses in New York and Philadelphia and was seeking additional venues for his productions. He leased the Music Hall and proposed to purchase and renovate it, adding a second balcony. At the same time, the Shubert brothers were in the process of buying theaters. Their object was to build a theatrical chain large enough to compete with the Klaw & Erlanger Theatrical Syndicate, which had acquired hundreds of theaters across the country, building a monopoly that was as financially successful as it was artistically stifling. Like Oscar Hammerstein, the Shuberts sought to add the Music Hall to their empire. Both lost, for in January, 1909, Otto Kahn, representing the Metropolitan Opera, quietly purchased the hall, removing it from the marketplace and ending its role as a competitive pawn. Kahn immediately changed the name to the Lyric Theatre, and alterations were announced, but not executed.

By purchasing the Lyric, Kahn had made a successful move in his competition with Hammerstein, but during his eleven years of ownership the theater lost money. In 1920 it was returned to public-spirited local control, when Kahn sold it to the Lyric Company, a syndicate headed by Hugh Hampton Young, head of the Urology Department of Johns Hopkins University. Other members of the 1920 board were John Randolf Bland, president and organizer of the United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company; Dr. A. R. L. Dohme, president of Sharpe & Dohme Chemical Company, pharmaceutical manufacturers; James Bruce, vice-president of the Atlantic Exchange Bank & Trust Company; Frederick R. Huber, Baltimore City Municipal Director of Music; Tilghman G. Pitts, member of Rossman and Hunter, Inc., local representatives of U.S.F.& G.; Ral Parr, partner in the insurance firm of Maury, Donnelly, Williams & Parr; Samuel C. Rowland, president of Bowman Lumber Company; W. Stuart Symington; George F. Jackson; and Albert Berrey. The Lyric Company added storefronts and a small lobby to the front of the building, replacing an original lamplit temporary entry shelter. In September, 1920, the Lyric reopened as a "high class" music hall, frowning on the presentation of nonmusical events. The first concert under the new management was presented by John Philip Sousa'a band. During the next few years, the Chicago Opera Company and the Metropolitan Opera performed there regularly. By 1928, however, both had cancelled further bookings of the Lyric because of the revenue limitations imposed by its relatively small seating capacity of 2000. In that year, to maintain its financial viability, the balcony was extended toward the rear, adding 700 seats. An additional 500 seats were obtained through realignment within the auditorium. Unsightly exterior access stairs were built to serve the new balcony level.

See Continuation Sheet No. 7

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

For the next several decades, the Lyric was able to present quality performances, but the financial spectre was ever present. The severity of the problem increased as the Lyric's outmoded facilities caused more and more groups to delete it from their tours. In June, 1978, major additions were undertaken to create suitable front-of-house audience facilities as well as much-needed stage service spaces. The new facilities, designed in the style of their own time, were so constructed as to augment, but not to alter significantly, the historic original fabric of the Lyric.

As an artifact of history, the Lyric is a monument to the cultural ambition of a growing city, an ambition that exceeded the bounds of possibility in its time to bring the building to prompt completion and one that survived through years of financial difficulty largely due to the continuing efforts of the city's leading citizens. The Lyric has, too, a major architectural significance, for it is a rare surviving 19th century American example of a theatre in the form of a rectilinear, or "shoe box," concert hall, and one of the nation's truly great environments for music.

During the 19th century, American theatres generally were based upon two European prototypical forms. One was the baroque opera house, with, generally, a domed ceiling, elaborate proscenium boxes, and two or more tiers of curved balconies circling the auditorium. Such notable buildings as the Academies of Music in Philadelphia (1857) and New York (1854) followed this type, as did numerous smaller theaters in cities across the nation. The second prototype, the one followed by the Lyric's designer, was the rectilinear, or "shoe box," concert hall, characterized by straight, parallel walls, a flat ceiling, a single gallery hugging the side, rear, and sometimes, the front walls, no proscenium boxes, and, in many cases, no real stage, an open orchestra platform, often with a great pipe organ, being sufficient for its purposes. Although more specialized and less flexible in form, and less commonly built, these halls, both in Europe and America, have had a continuing reputation for extraordinary acoustical quality. The two most notable European models were the Grosser Musickvereinssaal (1870), in Vienna, and the Neues Gewandhaus (1886 - destroyed during World War II), in Leipzig. No American hall of the period gained the world-wide reknown of those buildings, but notable examples, other than the Lyric, include the Cincinnati Music Hall (1879), and the Music Hall (1872) in Troy, New York. A later example of the type, the Boston Symphony Hall (1901), has gained global acclaim and is widely felt to be America's finest concert environment. Its form, like the Lyric's, was based upon that of the Neues Gewandhaus, a decision based less upon pragmatism and appearance than upon the extensive pioneering work in the development of acoustical theory of its acoustical designer, Wallace Sabine. Symphony Hall was the first hall anywhere to be designed according to scientifically derived principles of acoustics.

See Continuation Sheet No. 8

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

The study that surrounded its design and the critical acclaim that it has continued to receive affirm not only the genius of its designer, but that of the Neues Gewandhaus and the perception of T. Henry Randall in selecting its as model for the Lyric.

The Lyric is, in fact, a more faithful replication of the Neues Gewandhaus than was Symphony Hall. Unlike the Boston house it shared the Gewandhaus' deep ceiling cove, its vaulted window lunettes, and its elliptical stage and organ enclosure. The intended plan of the Lyric, too, with its semi-circular lobby, recalled that of the Gewandhaus, as did the incorporation into the building of a second, smaller recital hall and foyer. In the Neues Gewandhaus this feature had special interest in that it replicated the 1780 "old" Gewandhaus, a hall that had gained fame under the directorship of Felix Mendelssohn. The incorporation of this space as the ballroom, or "Little Lyric," into the Baltimore building brought a recall of that historic room to the American continent. The Della Robbia casts that ornamented its walls are now a prominent feature of the Lyric's main lobby.

The Lyric Theatre is a treasure both for Baltimore, as an artifact of its cultural and social history, and for the nation, as an acclaimed acoustical environment as well as an outstanding work of architecture - one of the few surviving examples of its theatrical type, and the only surviving building that recalls the forms of both Leipzig's celebrated Gewandhausen, both long since destroyed.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

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See Continuation Sheet No. 9

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See Continuation Sheet No. 10

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (continued)

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Verbal Boundary Description: The Lyric Theatre is located at 124 West Mount Royal Avenue, at a place ± 120 feet south of the southwest intersection of West Oliver Street and Maryland Avenue, thence southerly ± 125 feet binding on Maryland Avenue to intersect Mount Royal Avenue, thence binding on Mount Royal Avenue in a westerly and northwesterly direction to intersect a seven foot alley, thence easterly ± 165 feet, thence southerly ± 23 feet, thence easterly ± 150 feet to the place of beginning.

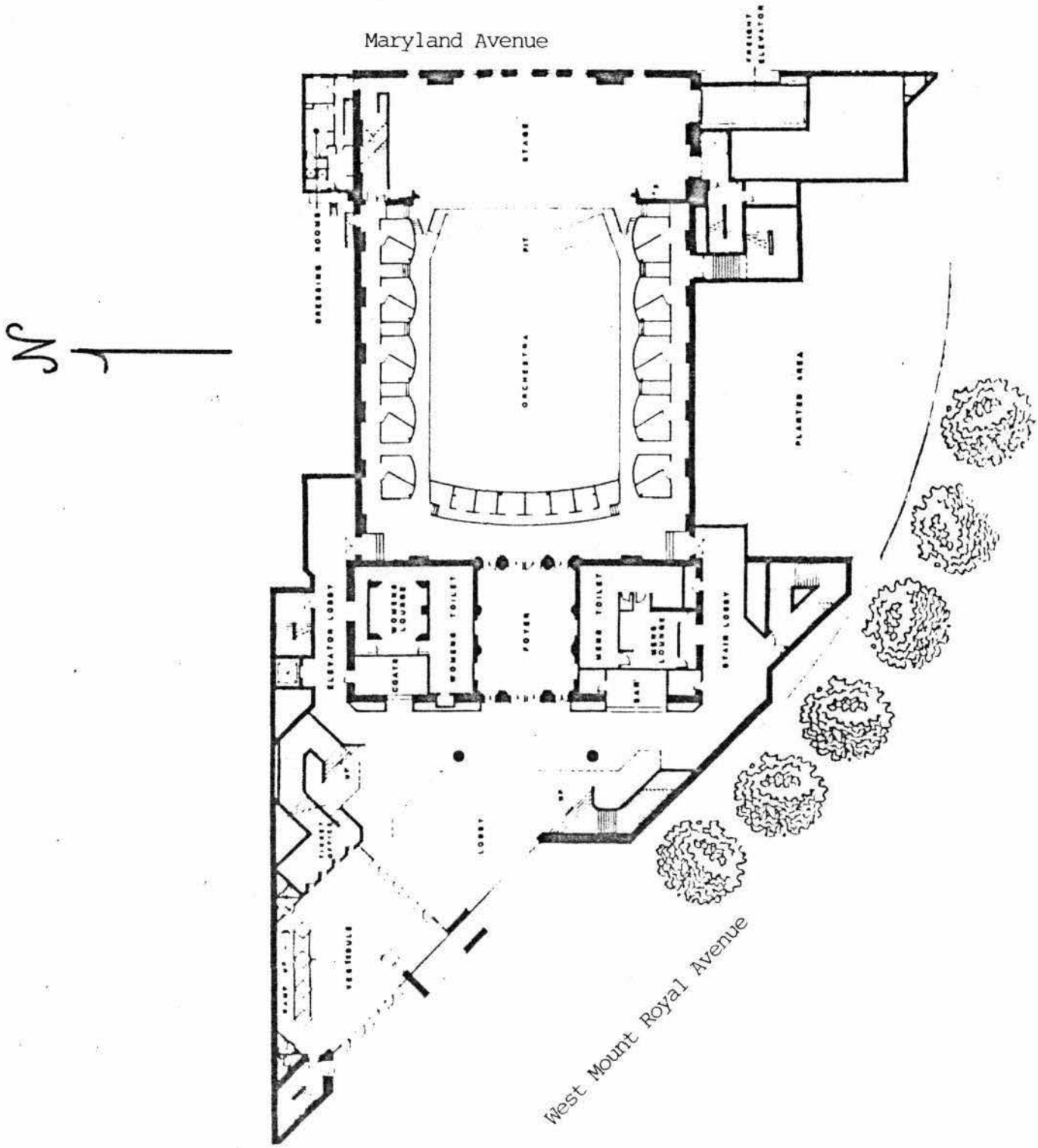
Justification: The property contains less than one acre and consists only of the city lot upon which the building stands presently and has stood historically.

B-106

Lyric Theatre

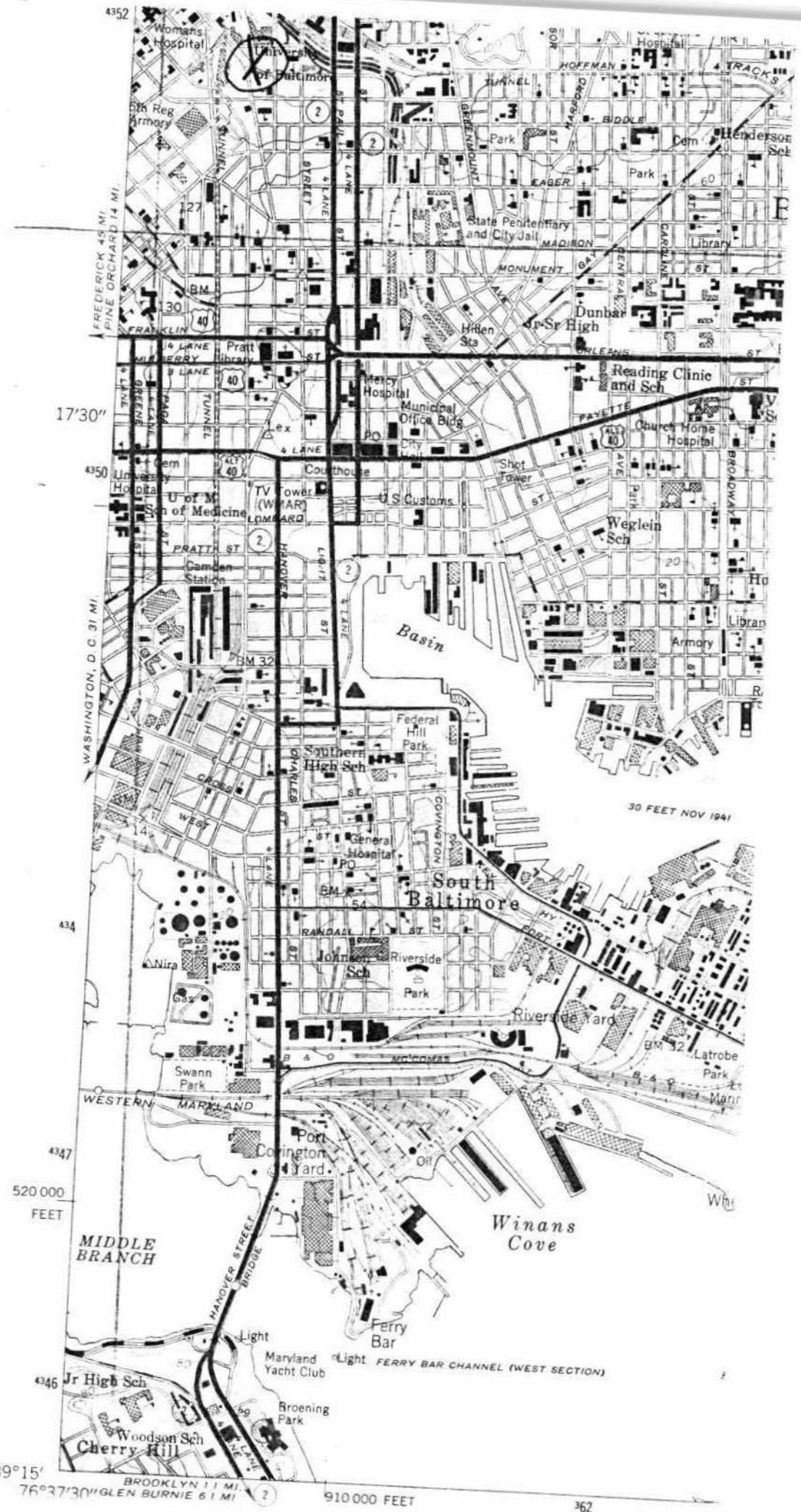
124 West Mount Royal Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland

floor plan, 1984



B-106
Lyric Theater
Baltimore
Maryland

18/360400/435740



9. Major Bibliog ıphical References

B-106

See Continuation Sheets Nos. 8, 9, and 10

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Baltimore East, Maryland

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	360400	4301450	B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet No. 10

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

state	code	county	code
n/a			

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Craig Morrison

organization Historic Buildings Consultant

date 20 August 1985

street & number 627 East Thompson Street

telephone (215) 423-3595

city or town Philadelphia

state PA 19125

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ___ state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date 12-3-85

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☐ Good	XX Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	XX Altered	☐ Unaltered		☐ Moved	XX Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL *(if known)* PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Lyric Theater was designed by the architect T. Henry Randall (1862-1905) along the same lines as the Neues Gewandhaus of Leipzig, but the plans for an imposing circular Baroque front were never completed due to a lack of funds. The present entrance is flanked on either side by stores; an unattractive corrugated fire escape, necessitated by interior expansion in 1928, is visible over the marquee.

The architecture of the interior is characterized by a wide oval-topped proscenium and full-length side balconies supported by columns, beneath which are located a number of boxes. The rear balcony was enlarged from 10 to 23 rows in 1928, raising the total seating capacity to 2616 for concerts, and 2456 for opera. When the hall is used for concerts, a plywood orchestra enclosure is erected on the stage. The ceiling is wooden, of 3/4-inch tongue-and-groove boards, covered with canvas and again painted to resemble wood. The walls are plaster on wood lath in the older part, plaster on gypsum lath in the newer part. The partitions between the boxes are two layers of painted canvas on a one-inch wooden frame. The balcony fronts are open-mesh cast iron. The floors are wooden, except for the concrete flooring of the addition to the balcony. The seats on the main floor as far back as the floor is level are braced on a trestle and are movable, enabling them to be stored behind curtained doors under the stage; the floor under these seats is of very fine hardwood, waxed and highly polished for dancing. The stage floor is constructed of a built-up wooden frame, at a height of 51.5 inches above the main floor at the front row of seats.

The theater's floor is carpeted, with a sponge rubber underpad, on all aisles except the upper four and at the rear of the balcony. The seats on the main floor have backrests of cloth-upholstered fronts and metal rears, with seat bottoms of artificial leather tops and metal undersides, and armrests of wood. The balcony seats are the same except the backrests are wood, not upholstered. Added absorptive materials in the hall include velvet draperies, hung with 100% fold, covering about 1200 square feet of wall space; and a damask masking curtain in the proscenium.

Since the Lyric was designed primarily as a music hall, not for use by opera, ballet, and other large stage companies, it has definite problems for these performances, including limited stage and storage space for sets and scenery, and inadequate dressing room facilities. Nevertheless, the Lyric is noted for its acoustical excellence, and specific acoustical details may be found in Leo L. Beranek's Music, Acoustics & Architecture. Mr. Beranek concludes, "Although for concerts the mid-frequency reverberation time is shorter than optimum, 1.5 seconds when the theater is fully occupied, the Lyric Theatre has a clear, warm, intimate sound with good brilliance. The hall is reasonably uniform acoustically, and orchestral music played in it is adequately loud. The sound is least pleasing at the rear of the main floor. Because the sides of the hall, which are penetrated by windows and doors, are also the outside walls of the building, aircraft and loud street noises can be heard inside the hall."[1]

[1] Leo L. Beranek, Music, Acoustics & Architecture, New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1962, p. 83.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

#8. SIGNIFICANCE continued

shunning such earlier events as a bicycle riding contest, a performance of Hindu fakirs, and an indoor flower garden show. The Lyric has been the site of performances by such famous artists as Caruso, Ponselle, Paderewski, Kreisler, Heifetz, Melchior, and Flagstad; it has been acclaimed by visiting conductors including Monteux, Munch, Ormandy, Reiner, and Stokowski. In 1928 the Philadelphia and New York Symphony Orchestras, who regularly played at the Lyric, threatened to raise their fees unless additional seats were provided; the Lyric Company responded by expanding the rear balcony.

The Lyric Foundation, a non-profit, non-stock corporation which took over the operation of the Lyric in 1968, hopes to preserve the theater and correct its drawbacks; the Foundation's president wants to "'place it once and for all irrevocably in the center of Baltimore's cultural activities.'"[1] The Foundation and the surrounding community, which includes the Maryland Institute and the University of Baltimore, hope to establish the Lyric as the permanent home of the Baltimore Symphony and the Baltimore Civic Opera, while at the same time improving the neighborhood.

In 1971 the members of the General Assembly of Maryland passed a resolution endorsing the Lyric's designation as one of Baltimore's historic monuments. The acoustical expert, Leo L. Beranek, has summarized the main concern for the Lyric: "The Lyric Theatre is one of the better halls of our country. Let us hope that time will preserve it from the unceasing demand for new buildings with ever-larger seating capacities."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. D6.

[2] Leo L. Beranek, Music, Acoustics, & Architecture, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1962, p. 86.

Form 10-300a
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Maryland	
COUNTY	
Baltimore City	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

The Lyric Theater

#9. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES continued

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B-106

Form 10-301
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

STATE	
Maryland	
COUNTY	
Baltimore City	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: The Lyric Theater

AND/OR HISTORIC: The Music Hall

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
124 West Mount Royal Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Baltimore

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Maryland	24	Baltimore City	510

3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE:
U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute map Quadrangle Baltimore East

SCALE: 1:24,000

DATE: 1953 Photorevised 1966

4. REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. Property broundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE	
Maryland	
COUNTY	
Baltimore City	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: The Lyric Theater

AND/OR HISTORIC: The Music Hall

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
124 West Mount Royal Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Baltimore

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Maryland	24	Baltimore City	510

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Gretchen Redden

DATE OF PHOTO: February 1973

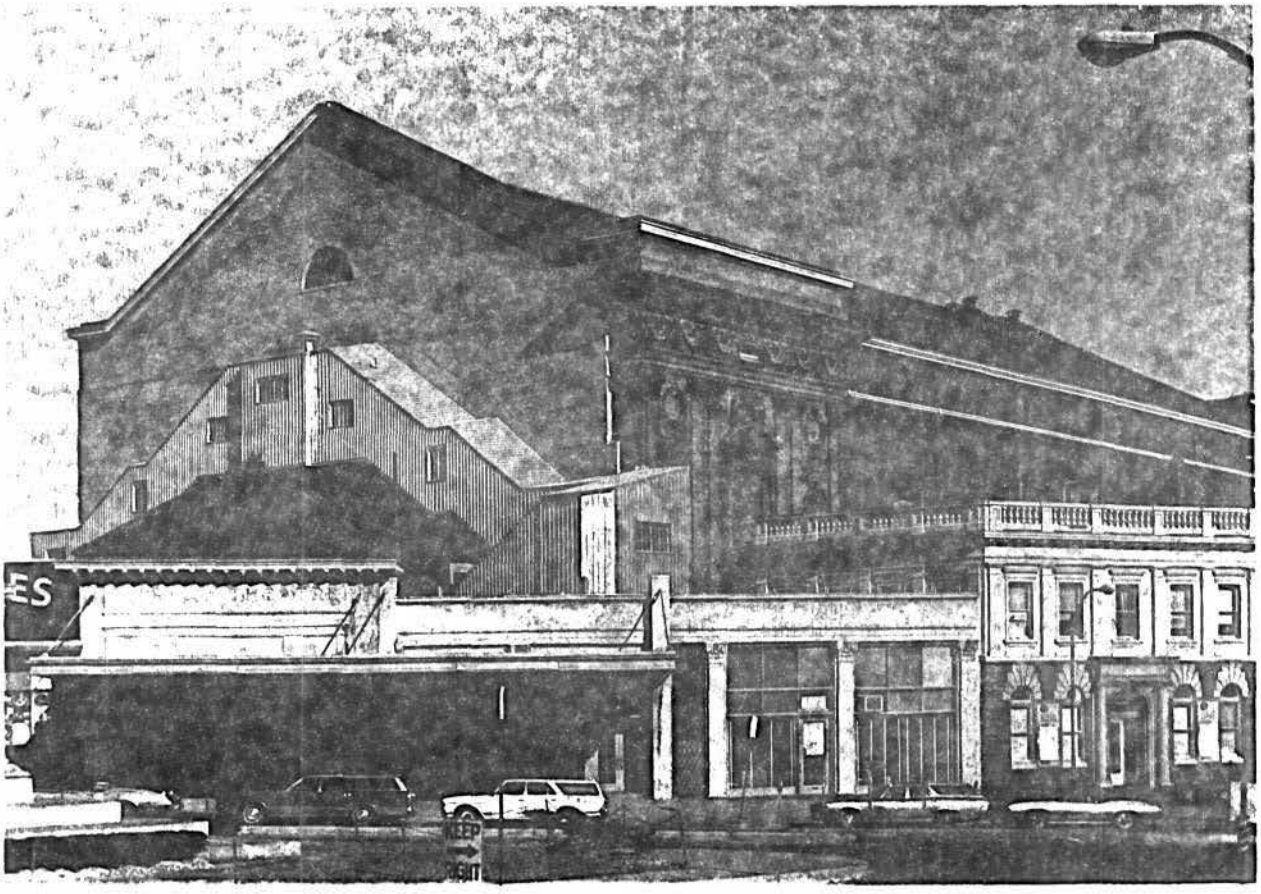
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Commission for Historical & Architectural Preservation
402 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Lyric Theater from the south

B-106



B-106

THE LYRIC THEATER →

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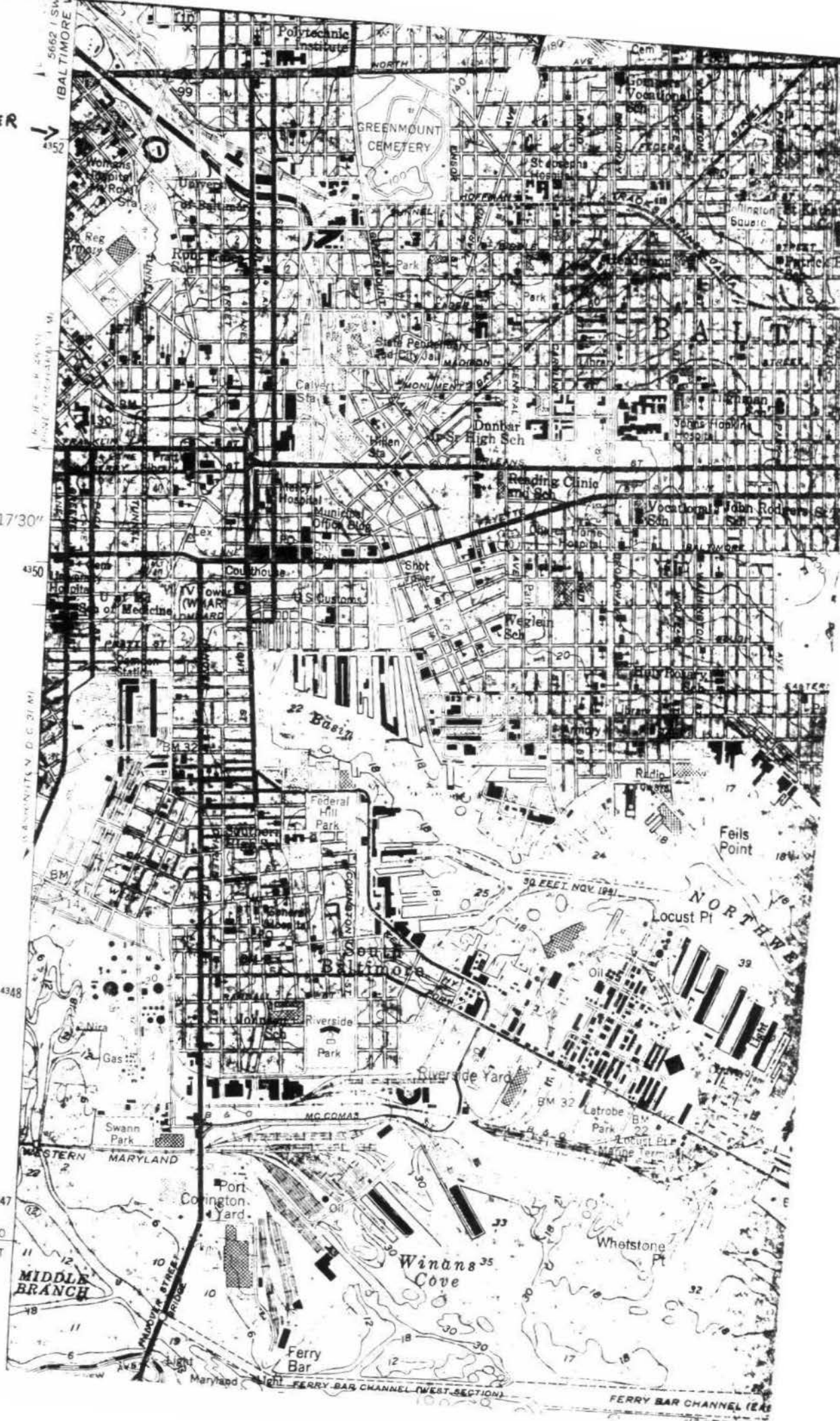
longitude:
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