

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Princess Theatre
Other names/ site number: _____
Name of related multiple property listing: n/a
(Enter N/A if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 112 2nd Avenue NE
City/Town: Decatur State: AL County: Morgan
Not for Publication: n/a Vicinity: n/a


3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request 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 this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 National Statewide X Local

Applicable National Register Criteria: X A B X C D

	/Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer	<u>9/26/25</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title		Date
Alabama Historical Commission		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		


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

Signature of commenting official		Date
Title		State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 X entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain): _____

	<u>12/18/2025</u>
Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action

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5. Classification / Ownership of Property: (check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ Private
☒ Public-Local
☐ Public-State
☐ Public-Federal

Category of Property: (check only one box)

- ☒ Building(s)
☐ District
☐ Site
☐ Structure
☐ Object

Number of Resources Within Property: (do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Non-Contributing	
1	1	Buildings
		Sites
1		Structures
		Objects
2	1	TOTAL

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0¹

6. Function or Use / Historic Functions: (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE
RECREATION AND CULTURE – theatre

Current Functions: (enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE – theatre

7. Architectural Classification: (enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT – Art Deco
LATE 19th & EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENT: commercial

Materials: (enter categories from instructions)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

BRICK, STUCCO, GLASS

¹ The Princess Theatre and adjacent auxiliary building were previously listed in the New Decatur Albany Historic District as contributing buildings. A recent update of the district removed these buildings from the boundaries.

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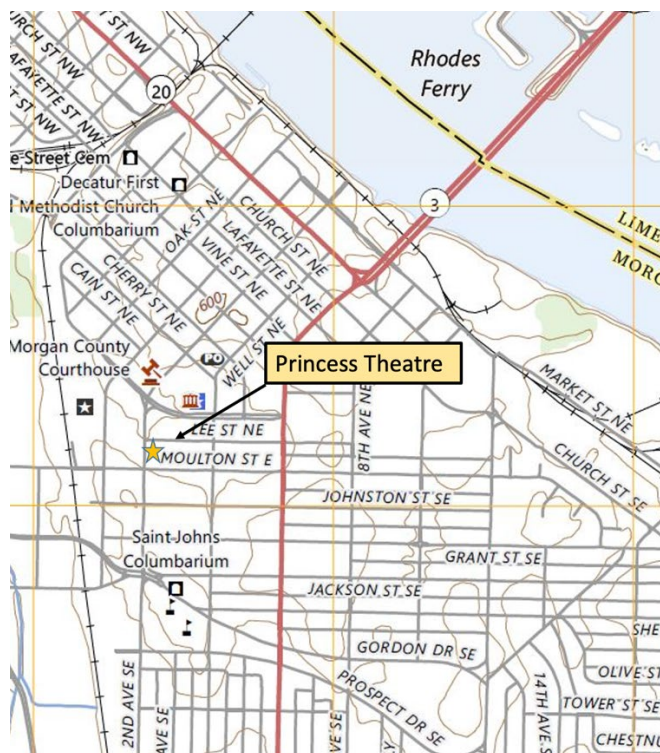
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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Princess Theatre located at 112 2nd Avenue NE shares a party wall to the north with an adjacent building. The historic theatre and adjacent building have been associated with each other since the façades were unified in 1919. The adjacent building was joined to the Princess on the interior when it was purchased to provide restrooms, an elevator, ADA access, and contemporary concessions in 1999. The combined buildings occupy roughly half a block at the north end of a commercial district centering on 2nd Avenue NE. The theatre and associated building are located on the north end of New Decatur's historic downtown. The majority of the buildings that surround the Princess are contemporary, and some, such as the buildings that house a BBQ restaurant and pizza restaurant, contain intrusive design elements. The fragmentation of the New Decatur-Albany Historic District at the north end of 2nd Avenue, leaving the Princess isolated is the reason that portion of the district was part of a boundary reduction.



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N

USGS Map 2020
7.5 minute series
1:24000
Decatur Quadrangle

Figure 1: Princess Theatre, USGS Decatur Quadrangle, 2020.

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Narrative Description

Princess Theatre (1919 building, 1941 current appearance) Contributing

Exterior:

The two-story theatre has a façade clad with stucco and decorated with character defining Art Deco details including black and yellow Carrara glass tiles and flanking stacks of mirrored structural glass panels. The theatre has a sheet metal marquee, canopy, and sign boards which are highlighted with multi-colored neon tubing and exposed, incandescent bulb lighting. Below the canopy is a recessed entry with radiused glass-block corners. The remaining street level wall is clad in black Carrara Glass panels with windows framed in contrasting yellow Carrara Glass panels. Three sets of double doors are the main entry for the theatre. (Photo 1 - 4)

The building has a shared firewall with a two-story masonry building on the north elevation.² The east elevation, which faces the alley, is taller than the neighboring two-story building by several feet, with its height emphasized even more by the fly tower over the stage, essentially creating the mass of a third story. (Photo 8) The first floor of the alley elevation projects out towards the parking lot a few feet beyond the main elevation. The roof on that section has a membrane coating. The fly tower appears to be clad with vertical metal panels, but its distance from the ground makes positive identification uncertain.

The south elevation has the three-story stage and fly tower addition on the far east end. (Photo 9 & 11) The historic portion of the theatre is constructed with common bond, seven rows of running bond followed by a row of headers. There are five openings on the first floor, a small recessed door near the center of the elevation, followed by two small fixed windows to the west and then a single metal slap door near the west end of the elevation. The final opening on this wall is a metal slab door surrounded by a raised brick frame, one brick wide on the west end, six bricks tall above the door, and one brick wide on the west end. This was the location of the segregated entrance. (Photo 12) A small section of black Carrara glass is located between the door and the front corner. Two parallel corbeled string courses project from the mid-point of the first floor. Multiple filled arch openings run along the first, second, and even basement level of this elevation, showing multiple fenestration changes. (Photo 10)

Interior:

The double doors on the front façade open into a wood-paneled lobby with a patterned terrazzo floor inset with a stylized map of Alabama. (Photo 12, 14) Two offices (a manager's office and a ticket office), two restrooms, and two stairs accessing balcony seating are nearly mirrored on either side of the lobby. Opposite the lobby entry two sets of double doors enter the foyer below balcony seating. The main level seating is sloped and composed of two rows of seats with a center aisle and side aisles in an open auditorium. (Photo 16) A secondary lobby is on a mezzanine level. (Photo 23) The balcony has three sections of seating divided by two aisles. (Photo 17) The balcony has a front and back section.³ Flooring in the theatre and on the second floor is carpet. The auditorium ceiling is modern acoustical tiles.

² This building no longer has an address, it was incorporated into the Princess complex in 1999, with doorways connecting the two buildings as part of a large remodel.

³ The back section of the balcony is currently not visible due to construction. There is a temporary plywood wall dividing it from the main portion of the balcony. The roof trusses in that area are being replaced and the temporary wall is to ensure the public does not enter the construction zone.

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The ceiling in the foyer and the second floor mezzanine appears to be plaster. The terrazzo floor with its Art Deco designed inlays, exotic wood paneling, Art Deco detailed stair railing, Art Deco detailed balcony railings, and curved stucco around the proscenium arch are character defining features. (Photo 24) The back of the house area, behind the proscenium and stage, includes the three-story fly-loft and houses the screens and lighting rigs required for theatre operations. (Photo 18) The back of the house is connected by a wide span, high-bay opening to the adjacent building. An elevator and enclosed stair access the second floor of the adjacent building.

Auxiliary Building (unknown build date, 1919 appearance) non-contributing

Exterior:

This two-story yellow bricked façade is laid in running bond. The first story has two evenly sized entrance bays. The southern bay is recessed, and has two sets of paired double doors with transoms and sidelights. Seven tall fixed lights create a full length transom above the storefront. The second bay is flush to the street and has a single pair of double doors with a large fixed window on each side and a narrow transom directly above the door. It has a matching seven-light transom above the storefront. The second floor has two large bays, each with four ganged one-over-one, double-hung wood windows, and four transoms, one located above every two pairs of windows. A rockfaced stone lintel is under each gang of windows. A darker row of bricks creating an outline of a rectangle is directly below each window bay. A single fabric awning is attached above each bay. Decorative corbeling and rockfaced squares are laid into the brick near the top of the façade. The façade ends in a crenelated parapet. The yellow bricked façade and the historic two part commercial block design, the clear entry articulation, decorative stone accents and crenelated parapet are character defining features. (Photo 5)

The north elevation is clad with running bond brick. The first floor fenestration pattern from the façade to the rear has a large fixed window on the far west end with three ganged fixed windows. A transom is made by six narrow fixed light. To the east are six irregularly spaced windows and two irregularly spaced doors. The fenestration is three windows, a door followed by three additional windows and a final door. All windows are one-over-one, double hung. Most appear to be replacements. The doors are non-historic metal slab units. There are nine transom level fixed windows that run above, while most are centered directly over a window or door, a few do not have corresponding fenestration below them. The single-pane, fixed transom windows have rockfaced stone lintels. The second floor has eleven one-over-one, single-hung wood windows with rockfaced stone lintels. Windows are evenly spaced with the exception of a gap between the third and fourth window with a filled-in doorway creating a large blank space in the wall. At the far-east end of the building an addition, is clad with running-bond brick. Lack of paint clearly identifies it from the painted, historic portion of the building. (Photo 6 & 7) The east elevation which faces a gravel and asphalt parking lot has a pair of metal doors off-centered to the south. The second floor has two unevenly spaced one-over-one, contemporary double-hung wood windows. This building juts out from the elevation of the Princess a few feet. The south elevation is a shared fire wall with the Princess.

Interior:

The west portion of the interior has a large contemporary metal staircase that accesses the second floor. (Photo 19) The rear portion of the interior provides access to the historic theatre through a pair of doors reached by three curved steps and a wheelchair ramp. (Photo 20) A glass block counter is the concessions stand. Behind the concessions stand is the concessions storage area. To the rear of the concession area, accessed by an open hallway are public restrooms. Behind

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the concessions area of the interior one moves into the addition portion of the building which houses an elevator dressing rooms, green room, and access to the rear of the stage. (Photo 21)

The second floor provides access to the mezzanine level of the Princess via a set of double doors. The rear of the second floor has a large performance space with bar. (Photo 26) The rear addition provides access to the elevator core and a large communal dressing room. The historic portion of the building has plaster and exposed brick walls in some portions. Ceiling is drywall and the wall surface in the transition to the dressing room area is drywall. (Photo 27 & 28) The historic wood flooring is mostly intact. The addition has drywall and laminate flooring.

Rear parking lot (1958) contributing structure

The parking lot on the Princess parcel was developed in 1958. The entirety of the lot extending to 4th Avenue NE was not developed until 2016, when a structure on the separate parcel to the rear of the parking was demolished and additional parking added.



Integrity and Changes Through Time

The Princess retains integrity of location and design. The majority of the materials for the Princess; Carrara glass, terrazzo, stucco, and lacewood, remain intact, as does the historic workmanship. The Princess retains the character defining exterior façade, including stucco and structural glass, the marquee, and steel windows. The interior retains its terrazzo floor, exotic lacewood paneling, decoratively painted ceilings, doors and hardware, display cases, lobby stairs, ticket office, balcony and sloped floor. The formerly segregated spaces, including the side entrance and stairs are intact as well. The building has a strong sense of feeling and evokes the Art Deco period. The association of the theatre, as an Art Deco movie theatre is clearly expressed. The majority of the materials for the auxiliary building, the yellow brick façade, terracotta brick side wall, rockfaced stone details, and double-hung wood windows remain. The Princess lacks much of its original setting since the majority of the buildings that surround it are contemporary, and some, such as the buildings that house a BBQ restaurant and pizza restaurant to the south, contain intrusive design elements. The fragmentation of the New Decatur-Albany Historic District at the north end of 2nd Avenue, leaving the Princess isolated is the reason that portion of the district was part of a boundary reduction.

When the building was first remodeled from a livery stable to the Princess in 1919, matching brick cladding was installed on both the Princess and the adjacent auxiliary building. A fly loft was constructed in 1935 at the rear of the building to house the stage scenery and lighting. The 1913 and 1927 Sanborn maps show that between these years the building

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adjacent to the Princess was enlarged and remodeled to expand into its existing foot print. It is labeled as a post office during this time. The Princess portion of the façade was clad over in stucco and structural glass in 1941. The 1948 Sanborn map shows that windows along the alley were bricked in as part of the 1941 remodel. The adjacent building was used as a bowling alley during this time. In 1999 a \$6 million renovation restored the marquee, built a new stage house, and upgraded building systems. The project included the adjacent building, connecting it internally to the theatre and incorporating it into the programming with a ground level concession lobby and dressing rooms and alternate event spaces on the second floor. The proscenium and the back of the house areas were constructed in 1999. The seating layout was changed during this remodel to better meet fire code requirements. The original two aisle auditorium, with three large seating areas was reconfigured to have two large seating areas with three aisles.

The attached auxiliary building was remodeled circa 1999 to serve as the main lobby and concessions stand for the Princess. The major change to the building was to address fire code and occupancy requirements which were addressed by adding the open staircase from the main floor to the second floor. This metal staircase is located in the front portion of the building.

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8. Statement of Significance

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

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

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 grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance: (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
ETHNIC HERITAGE – Black

Period of Significance:

1941-1978

Significant Dates:

1941

Significant Person: (complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation:

n/a

Architect / Builder:

Frahn, Albert R. (architect for 1941 remodel)
W. S. Reeves & Son (contractor for 1941 remodel)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph: (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Constructed in 1887 as the Casa Grande Stables this building was remodeled into a theatre in 1919, and has been used continuously in that capacity through the current day. In 1941 the building underwent another remodel, this one by architect Albert R. Frahn, giving the building an Art Deco façade and interior detailing that remains today. The Princess Theatre is an iconic building in the New Decatur/Albany downtown commercial area. It embodies the importance of the performing arts for the downtown, from vaudeville plays to silver screens to live shows. The theatre was, and continues to be, an important economic and cultural entertainment driver for the city of Decatur. The Princess has a long history of serving the community by hosting events like graduations, serving as temporary homes for congregations, and providing space for community engagement and activation. The Princess also tells an important story of segregation in entertainment venues and retains several features important to that story, including the segregated entry, vestibule, stairs, lobby and balcony seating area. The Alabama Historical Commission holds a Preservation and Conservation Easement on the building's exterior, which recognizes the Art Deco façade as "exceptionally educational and instructive with regards to downtown development and theatres in the United States."⁴ The Princess is listed at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the areas of Entertainment/Recreation and Ethnic History - Black as the city's only remaining building with identified segregated spaces. It is also listed under Criterion C under the category of Architecture. The period of significance for the Princess is from 1941 when the building was remodeled with its current Art Deco features through 1978 when it ceased use as a commercial movie theatre.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

History of New Decatur:

In 1887, New Decatur was planned and laid out as a progressive city in the New South. The town advertised as the "Chicago of the South" to attract industry. Its design included broad streets and a central park, and also set aside distinct zones for residential enclaves, industrial development and a business district. The newly developed city was a "twin" to the existing Decatur, Alabama, located along the Tennessee River. The original Decatur was formed in 1921 when patents for land tracks were issued to the Decatur Land Company, organized the prior year by a number of early homesteaders. The city was officially incorporated in 1926. The formation of the Tuscumbia-Decatur Railroad in the 1830s combined with Decatur's location on the river ensured future economic growth until that same location proved detrimental during the Civil War. Decatur's strategic location at the juxtaposition of rail lines and the river meant that control of the city transferred between Confederate and Union forces several times during the war. The city was almost entirely razed by the end of the War. When the railroads were reconstructed the city of Decatur increased its corporate limits. The strategic location of the community was the focus of several local businessmen who incorporated the Decatur Land Improvement and Furnace Company in 1887 and acquired 5,600 acres of land to build a new city adjacent to Decatur. The two cities, which abutted each other, had their own government, police, post offices and schools. New Decatur had renamed itself Albany in 1916 to ease rivalries between the two cities. Continued competition and bickering between the two municipalities wore on the state legislature, which required the two cities to merge in 1927

⁴ Lord Aeck Sargent, "Historic Structure Report, Princess Theatre." July 25, 2022. Report copies archived in Historic Preservation and Park and Recreation Files, pg 9.

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for the construction of a new bridge across the Tennessee River. The merged cities adopted the original name of Decatur. Even though the municipalities merged the city still has two commercial districts, less than a mile apart; Bank Street for the original Decatur and 2nd Avenue for New Decatur.

The Princess is located in what was originally New Decatur's business district, 2nd Avenue. 2nd Avenue quickly emerged as the central commercial corridor, with commercial blocks radiating outward from the cross streets. The Princess, which originally served as a livery stable, was located on the north end of the main block. Sanborn maps between 1903 and 1948 show the block that the Princess was located on and the block directly across Holly Street from the theatre had business that were predominately wholesale or light industrial; a tin shop, a printing studio, a wagon/buggy shop. The 1908 Sanborn shows a tin shop in the building adjacent to the Princess with the other storefront vacant and the second floor used by a fraternal lodge. In 1927, New Decatur (then named Albany) was annexed into the earlier river city of Decatur. By 1927 the surrounding buildings showed the rapid ascent of the automobile era with auto sales and repair service businesses housed in neighboring shops. The Sanborn map from this year showed the Albany Post Office occupying a portion of the building adjacent to the Princess. By 1948, when two post offices no longer needed once the cities had merged, a portion of the building housed a bowling alley. Between 1927 and 1948 the land directly behind the Princess was used as a parking lot. Between the 1980s and the early 2000s many of the buildings to the north and west of the Princess were razed for new development.



Figure 2: Casa Grande Livery Stable, before its 1919 remodel into the Princess Theatre, courtesy Morgan County Archives.

Criterion A, Entertainment/Recreation:

Theatres in Decatur & Albany

Albany had the first movie theatre in the Decatur, as the two cities were often called. Constructed in 1912, the Delite Theatre had a seating capacity of 379 and likely hosted vaudeville entertainment originally. The theatre appears to have located on the southern end of 2nd Avenue NE, but historical documentation is unclear. Vacant for an undetermined period of time, it was remodeled in 1934 and named the Capitol Theatre. The theatre was subsequently demolished in

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the 1950s.⁵ In 1941 The Roxy, with an auditorium that seated 467, was located at what is now 718-720 Bank Street, in the original Decatur municipality. The Roxy closed in 1961 and went through a major façade remodel, including removal of the marquee after its closure. As a result it is no longer recognizable as a theatre. Black residents of the city originally had two theatre they could attend that were free from segregation practices, The first, owned by J. J. Sykes, has an unknown construction date. That theatre burned by 1933. The Elite Colored Theatre opened in 1949 at the corner of Vine Street NW and Madison Street NE. It opened in 1949 with seating for 350. It closed shortly thereafter in 1953. The building is no longer extant. No other theatres were built in Decatur until the advent of drive-in movie theatres in the 1950s and the large multi-theater complexes of the 1980s. The Princess, now the oldest theatre in the city, has operated almost continuously as a theatre from 1919 until the current day.

The Princess

The building was originally built as a livery stable for the Casa Grande Hotel in 1887. The building went through several owners until 1914 when it was sold at auction. The need for livery stables with the advent of the automobile age rapidly declined at this time and the building was repurposed as a result of this shift. In 1919, B. L. Malone, a local business man who once operated a livery business out of the building, converted the stables to a variety theater.⁶ The Princess Theatre Company of Little Rock, Arkansas obtained a five-year lease on the building, and operated "The Princess," one of several theatres they managed under the same name.⁷ A \$100,000 renovation on the building started in the summer of 1919. The finished theatre had a capacity of about 1,500 and was advertised as holding the largest crowd of any playhouse between Birmingham and Nashville. The auditorium had twelve exits allowing it to be emptied in three minutes. The Princess showed a mix of live theatre, vaudeville acts, variety shows and movies in addition to hosting community and church events during this time. An orchestra pit provided space for musicians. The building campaign was completed at the end of December, just before the opening night vaudeville production of "Tea for Three." The show was attended not only by Decatur and Albany residents, but by residents from neighboring Courtland, Athens, Mooresville, and Hartselle and even from points further south including Birmingham and Cullman. A milestone for the Princess was the showing of the theatres first motion picture, "The Wolf," later that year. In 1923 the theatre was redecorated and placed under management of the Crescent Amusement Company of Nashville, Tennessee. The company, formed in 1912, operated a total of twenty theatres in Nashville, with the remaining fifty-seven others located predominately in Tennessee. It also operated a handful of theatres in Kentucky and Alabama.⁸ The Princess' size helped it become the major theatre in "the Decaturs" as the two cities were called. In 1928 the evangelist Bob Jones spoke at the Princess. The first "talkie" movie, "The Broadway Melody" was shown in 1929. It was the first sound film to win an Academy Award for Best Picture and had a technicolor sequence that foreshadowed the fully colored movies that were to become standard by the 1960s. In 1929 Decatur residents were enthralled with a special visit from Leo the lion. Leo was the trademark lion of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer that roared at the beginning of all the company's motion picture. The lion, who visited Decatur as part of a world tour, was met by the mayor and other city officials at City Hall before his arrival at the Princess for an afternoon public performance.⁹ Leo wasn't the only animal to perform at the Princess, in 1938 Gene Autry performed on stage with his trained horse Champion. The Princess continued to dominate movie listings in the local newspaper with more movies and larger listing sections than other movie theatres in the city. The

⁵ Information on the Elite/Capitol Theatre is scarce, photographs of the theatre could not be located. Photographs indicate that the Roxy Theatre, much like the original Princess Theatre, was a marquee over an existing commercial storefront. That building exterior was extensively remodeled after the Roxy was closed and is no longer recognizable as a theatre.

⁶ n.a. "Princess Theatre One Of Prettiest In South To Open With Play Tonight" *Albany Decatur Daily*, December 30, 1919, pg 1.

⁷ n.a. "New Theatre Is Names Princess, Malone States" *Albany Decatur Daily*. September 4, 1919, pg 1.

⁸ n.a. "Crescent Amusement Co. Saga Follow Industry Closely" *The Tennessean*. February 24, 1952, pg 64.

⁹ n.a. "Famous Movie Lion Arrives Here Tuesday" *The Decatur Daily*, March 18, 1929, pg. 5.

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Princess was able to book an early showing of the *Grapes of Wrath*. Advance tickets to *Gone With the Wind* in 1940 were even sold by mail with money order or cashier's check. *The Decatur Daily* routinely advertised free tickets to the theatre through the classified ads as part of an advertising routine for their classified section.



Figure 3: Princess Theatre, circa 1939, courtesy Morgan County Archives.

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Figure 4: Leo the Lion visits Decatur, *The Decatur Daily*, March 16, 1929, pg 2.

The 1941 Remodel

By 1940 the Princess was owned by Crescent Amusement Company which also operated the Capitol and Roxy theatres in Decatur.¹⁰ The Princess was much larger than the other two venues and the decision was made to remodel the theatre into a more contemporary style. The Princess closed briefly in 1941 for a remodeling that transformed it into the Art Deco façade that exists today. Newspaper reports indicate that the interior of the building was essentially gutted to complete the remodel. Newspaper reports indicate that the interior of the building was essentially gutted to complete the remodel, the front façade was replaced by the Art Deco detailed Carrera Glass and neon tubing, any remaining windows on the alley side of the building were filled in. The new façade and gutting of the interior resulted in a loss of character defining features associated with the pre-remodel theatre, which is why the period of significance for the building begins with the 1941 remodel. The Art Deco remodel cost \$50,000 and was carried out by local contractor W. S. Reeves & Son. The remodeling was carefully managed to leave the Princess operational for as long as possible, by removing the state and fly lofts to convert the building into a movie theatre. New concrete and reinforced steel footings were placed at the front of the building and the entire framework of the front wall was steel. The walls were finished with acoustical plaster and the ceiling was acoustical board. The first and second balconies and projection booth from the original version of the Princess were removed and replaced with structural steel as well. The removal of the orchestra pit and reducing the size of the stage, remnants of live performances from the theatre's vaudeville era allowed for the addition of more seats to the main floor. The new seats were both larger and there was more space between the rows. The interior colors were noted as soft blue, gray, and burgundy with fluorescent paints for wall designs. Black lights were used to make the carpet glow. Primavera wood from South America (often known as white mahogany) and Mexican Lacewood were specifically called out as materials used in the remodel along with maple for the lobby doors and trim. Williams Neon Sign Company was responsible for more than 5,000 feet of neon tubing in red, blue, green, white, gold, and yellow.

¹⁰ Newspaper articles stated that the Princess and the Roxy were both owned and operated by Crescent Amusement Company. While the company operated the Capitol theatre, it did not have ownership of the building. The Crescent Amusement Company operated 150 theatres in eighty municipalities in three states.

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When the remodel was finished Crescent's general manager C. R McCrown stated that "We do not have a theatre in our ... operations that will compare with the arrangement for comfort, style, and restful atmosphere of the Princess." The remodeled theatre provided space for 700 people on the main floor with seating for an additional 350 in the balcony, part of which was specifically called out for Black patrons in the front page newspaper article that covered the Princess' grand reopening. The grand reopening ceremonies included officials from the Kiwanis, Rotary, Civitan, Lions, Elks, Chamber of Commerce, American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, and Womens Chamber of Commerce.¹¹ Hollywood stars sent dozens of telegrams congratulating the Princess on its new updates. These messages were printed in *The Decatur Daily* the day of the grand reopening. Dorothy Lamour, Betty Gable, Henry Fonda, Ginger Rogers, Cary Grant, Bob Hope, Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney, Bettie Davis, Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, and Ronald Reagan were among those sending their wishes.¹² The accolades for the new theatre were not just confined to telegraphs from cross country. A letter to the editor by Augustus Bassett, son of a former city clerk for New Decatur wrote a glowing letter to the editor about the newly remodeled Princess, stating:

"Completion of the Princess Theatre means much more to Decatur than just a beautiful addition to an expanding building program. One of the greatest factors in advertising is eye appeal and the picture house certainly has that and will make a lasting impression on all visitors who see it. ... This I can say without exaggeration: in my travels in the Orient, in Europe and all over the globe I have not seen a moving picture theatre of similar size anywhere that equaled in beauty and magnificence our own Princess."¹³

The Decatur Daily summarized the remodel more succinctly: "If Decatur had it all to do over again, she would ask the building of the Princess theatre just like it is. The new theatre is perfect."¹⁴

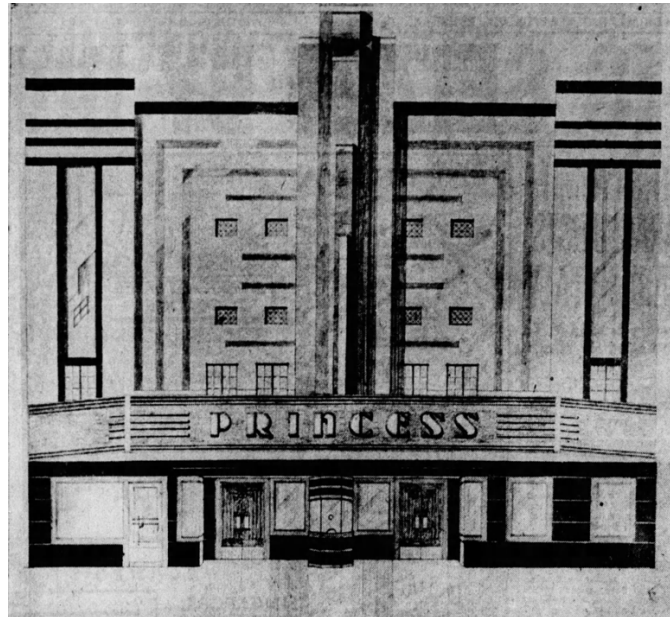


Figure 5: Albert R. Frahn's conceptual drawing of the remodeled Princess, *The Decatur Daily*, February 15, 1941, pg 2.

¹¹n.a. "New Princess Theatre Will Open Thursday Night" *The Decatur Daily*, August 6, 1941, pg 1 and 4.

¹²n.a. "Western Union", *The Decatur Daily*, August 6, 194, pg 6.

¹³ Augustus Bassett, "Letter to the Editor" *The Decatur Daily*, August 8, 1941, pg 8.

¹⁴ n.a., n.t., *The Decatur Daily*, August 9, 1941, pg 4.

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Figure 6: The auditorium of the Princess gutted during the 1941 remodel, photo courtesy Morgan County Archives.

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THE DECATUR DAILY, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 1941

Grand Opening

at 6:30 o'clock P.M.
THURSDAY
August 7, of the Beautiful

New PRINCESS

"ALABAMA'S MOST MODERN THEATRE"

A Message TO YOU:

The New Princess which opens tomorrow is the thrilling climax to over twenty years of our confidence in Decatur. It is the fulfillment of a promise to give the people of Decatur and vicinity the most beautiful theatre in the Crescent Amusement Company's entire group.

The New Princess is a marvelous achievement in modern design. It is an outstanding contribution to a growing city's architectural beauty. At night it is a colorful spectacle with an imposing marquee brilliantly illuminated by the largest neon lighting system in Alabama.

The world's finest screen entertainment which will be shown at this theatre of glamorous beauty, will prove a magnetic influence in drawing people to Decatur from many miles around. Meet your friends in Decatur for luncheon, to shop and then enjoy a delightful program of entertainment at the New Princess.

Comfort is the keynote of all the furnishings of this theatre. Its deep lounge seats; its perfect vision from any point in the theatre; its acoustical perfection throughout main floor and balconies; and its year round air-conditioning all combine to make the New Princess an unsurpassed engineering triumph. We urge you to inspect the luxurious mezzanine lounge, the tiled rest rooms—all of it—it's YOUR Princess!

(SIGNED) **TONY SUDEKUM**
President, Crescent Amusement Co.
G. P. BANNIZA
Manager, Princess Theatre.

SOME FACTS about your New Theatre:

The New Princess is absolutely fire-proof for your protection. Complete flooring of main auditorium is built of steel and concrete. Entire projection room is built of steel and concrete.

The heating plant has been completely removed from the building proper and installed in a separate building beyond the fire-proof doors of the theatre.

Also the theatre has been completely re-wired making it absolutely fire-proof.

OUR GIANT AIR-CONDITIONING PLANT WILL BE IN OPERATION

The New Princess is one of the few theatres between Cleveland and Miami to have installed the new illuminated fluorescent carpeting and black lighting effects.

And Here is the Biggest Surprise of All!!!
POSITIVELY NO ADVANCE

In admission prices for the New Princess. Prices will be the same as they were at the old Princess and the Roxy. Matinee: Adults, all seats 25c plus tax. Night: Adults, main floor 35c plus tax. Balcony, 25c plus tax. Children, 10c all times, plus tax.

Colored Adults, all times 15c Plus Tax
Children, all times 10c Plus Tax

YOUR ACADEMY AWARD WINNER

ON OUR SCREEN OPENING DAY AND FRIDAY
Direct from Radio City Music Hall, N.Y.

Finger ROGERS

IN THE PICTURE OF HER DREAMS—
TOM DICK and HARRY

GEORGE MURPHY • ALAN MARSHAL • BURGESS MEREDITH

Directed by CARSON KANIN
Produced by ROBERT SISK

THESE BIG HIT ATTRACTIONS ARE ON THEIR WAY TO THE NEW PRINCESS!

Aug. 10 and 11: MICKEY ROONEY and JUDY GARLAND in "BABES IN ARMS"—First time shown in Decatur. Aug. 12, 14 and 15: WILLIAM POWELL and MYRNA LOY in THEIR LATEST, "LOVE CRAZY."

Watch for Date of These Brand New Hits—Coming Soon!

"Man Hunt with a Big Cast," Frieda, Lane in "Million Dollar Baby"	sell in "They Met in Rome," Gary Cooper in "Sergeant York"	Edward G. Robinson, Marlene Dietrich and George Raft in "Scarface"	In "The Bride Came C.O.D.," Tyrone Power with Betty Grable in "A Yank in the E. A. F."
Mary Martin and Don Ameche with Richard Dix in "Kiss the Boys Goodbye"	The Thrilling Melodrama, "Un-derground," Jack Benny in "Charlie Aunt"	Harold Red Wright's "Shepherd of the Hills," with John Wayne, Betty Hutton and Harry Carey, Jr. in Technicolor.	Robert Taylor in "Billie the Kid," Mickey Rooney in "Life Begins for Andy Hardy."
Jane Crawford in Her Greatest Picture, "A Woman's Face."	Great Broadway Musical Comedy—"Hellzapoppin'."	Spencer Tracy in "The Lady and Mr. Hyde."	James Stewart in "Navy Blue and Gold."
Clark Gable and Bessie Ransome	Abbott & Costello in "In the Navy" with Dick Powell.	James Cagney and Bette Davis	Stuart Edward White's "Wild Geese Calling" starring Henry Fonda.

"Alone of the South Seas," in Technicolor, starring Dorothy Lamour.

The New PRINCESS THEATRE

"Alabama's Most Modern Theatre"

Figure 7: Grand Opening of the Princess Theatre, *The Decatur Daily*, August 6, 1941, pg 16.

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Figure 8: Princess Theatre, Gala Opening, 1941, courtesy Princess Theatre Collection.



Figure 9: Princess Theatre post 1941 remodel, courtesy Morgan County Archives.

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The Decline of Downtown Movie Theatres and the Rebirth of the Princess

Post-World War II Decatur's downtown followed the pattern of countless others across the country encountering decline and economic problems created by suburban flight and the introduction of the automobile. By the 1950s, as automobiles became more important and newly built drive-in-theatres on the outskirts of town competed with the Princess. Three drive-in theatres were constructed in the suburbs of Decatur; the Sunset (1949 – demolished 1960), the Bowline (1955 – demolished 1988), and the Thunderbird (1960s – demolished 1985). The Gateway Theatre, constructed in 1967 as a traditional indoor movie theatre was considerably south of downtown, located at 1820 6th Avenue SE, which also served as Route 31, a major north-south highway in Alabama. Although considerably smaller than the Princess, with 680 seats, its location in a new shopping center, with plenty of free parking, made it popular.¹⁵

The Princess accommodated the automobile age by advertising the first parking lot with automatic parking gates in the city in 1958. Parking during the day cost a quarter, although fees were not charged on Sundays and on holidays. Starting at 7pm each evening the parking was free. Although the Princess remained popular, likely due to still having more seats than any of its competitors, the other two theatres operated by Crescent Amusement Company in Decatur, the Delite and the Roxy closed in 1953 and 1961 respectively. In 1962 the Princess is sold to the United Amusement Company. The 1978 opening of the Beltline Mall (now known as the Decatur Mall) to the southwest of downtown drew retail traffic away from downtown Decatur. The opening of the new theatre at the mall led to the rapid decline of the Princess, which ceased to be the primary movie theatre in the community. Thus the 1978 end date for the Princess' significance. Concerned that the Princess might become derelict and how that would impact the downtown a group of civil leaders led by The Decatur Daily owner Barrett Shelton Sr. explored the possibility of the city buying the Princess and renovating it as a performing arts center, and a catalyst for downtown redevelopment.



Figure 10: Princess parking lot, The Decatur Daily, November 16, 1958, pg 5.

¹⁵ The Gateway closed in 2000 as the newer AMC Cineplex with 3-D and jumbo digital screens drew movie goers to the Decatur Mall.

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In the 1960s and 1970s Operation New Decatur aimed to revitalize the downtown commercial core (Bank Street and 2nd Avenue) that had fallen into decline. A civic center was one of the amenities planned as part of the broader effort but the project was too costly for city leaders to support and it never materialized. With the closing of the Princess Theatre Mayor Bill Dukes and other civic leaders saw an opportunity for the city to save their iconic theatre and gain an events theater. The city purchased the theatre on June 14, 1978. In July of 1982 the city council voted to use a HUD grant in tandem with municipal funds to match private funding. While the city would maintain the building a nonprofit organization was formed to operate the building as a performing arts center. This group pledged funds to renovate the theatre.¹⁶ The refurbished building opened to the public in 1983 after \$750,000 in renovations were complete, which included the restoration of the neon marquee. The theatre now serves as a regional performing arts center hosting musicians, comedians, storytellers, local theatre productions, and occasionally vintage movies including Disney's *Lady and the Tramp*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, and *It's A Wonderful Life*. Of the ninety-seven theatres known to have been operated by the Crescent Amusement Company only ten, including the Princess, still show movies. Over the years the Princess has hosted local theatre groups and professional musicians as diverse as Ray Charles, Tony Randall, The Glenn Miller Orchestra, The Indigo Girls, Ricky Skaggs, and Lyle Lovett. The Princess is such an iconic landmark in the community that it was showcased in the Historic Preservation Commission's Designing Decatur educational booklet from 2021, and a special coloring page was made of the building in support of a city-wide historic preservation initiative.

Criterion A, Ethnic Heritage – Black:

In the late 1800s Alabama law began to require separate schools and public accommodations for Black and white citizens. By the early 20th century segregation was entrenched in the 1901 Alabama State Constitution. Although specific records have not been located, it is likely that the Princess Theatre was segregated from its creation in 1919. The theatre would have retained segregated seating (with Blacks being seated exclusively in the upstairs balcony) until 1964 when the Civil Rights Act outlawed segregation in public accommodations. The venue's status holding the largest auditorium in town put it in an unusual situation with the visit of George Washington Carver in 1935, where Blacks sat in the main portion of the auditorium and whites were relegated to a balcony.

In 1935 George Washington Carver visited Decatur to visit his namesake school, Carver School, constructed in 1927 for Decatur's African American students. The school, which had been known by a number of different names in its early history, including Gibbs Street School, East Decatur Colored School, and Albany Negro School was renamed "Carver School" in 1935. Carver, born enslaved, became a botanist and prominent scientist and inventor, later teaching at Tuskegee Institute. When Dr. Carver visited Decatur in June that year he attended the dedication service of the newly named school and then delivered the Baccalaureate sermon for the school's graduating class of 1935. The Baccalaureate service was held at the Princess Theatre. The local newspaper reported that more than 1,000 people, a large percentage of which were white, attended the sermon.¹⁷ The number of white people wanting to attend the event was significant enough that the paper reported on the first balcony being reserved for white visitors. The segregated entrance for Blacks was on the far southwest corner, accessed from the alley, the same location where it exists today.¹⁸

¹⁶ Melissa Ford Thorton, *The Princess Theatre: A Grand Old Dame*, no location, Integrated Communications Inc., 2023, pg 68-69.

¹⁷ n.a. "Interest High In Carver Address" *The Decatur Daily*, May 29, 1935, pg 3.

¹⁸ The 1919 version of the Princess also had a segregated balcony area, which they referred to in period newspapers as an upper and lower balcony. The upper portion of which was historically reserved as the African American section. The official date the theatre was desegregated has not been located.

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Decatur originally had two theatres dedicated to Black patrons, located in what was often called Cross-Town, and later Old Town, a neighborhood to the northwest of Bank Street. The first was a theatre owned by J. J. Sykes, located at 411 Vine Street NW. Its date of creation is unknown and it burned in 1933.¹⁹ Newspaper advertisements indicate that some showings at the theatre were reserved for white patrons only. The second theatre, named the Elite Theatre, was located on the corner of Vine and Madison Streets NW. The theatre was operational between 1949 and 1953 and held approximately 350 patrons. The building is no longer extant as well. Information on the Elite is scarce but its short operational span may have been connected with a significant drop in Decatur's Black population in the post-World War II years. The 1920 U.S. Census records lists Decatur's Black residents as 46% of the population. By 1960 the percentage of Black residents in Decatur had dropped to 11%, while the number of white citizens had increased to 85%. This shift in demographics was part of a larger national trend, labeled as the Great Migration. Millions of Black Americans moved away from the South to other regions of the United States to escape racial violence and Jim Crow laws. The smaller remaining Black population may not have been sufficient to support their own theatre, leaving the Princess as the only viable theatre.



Figure 11: Princess Theatre Gala opening, 1941, courtesy Morgan County Archives.

¹⁹ Peggy Towns. Interviewed by Caroline Swope, July 21, 2025.

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The Princess had segregated seating for its patrons, which was specifically called out in the August 6, 1941 newspaper spread advertising the reopening of the theatre.²⁰ The main auditorium, which seated 700 and parts of the balcony, which seated 350, were reserved for white patrons. Leonard Raybon, the first Black person to serve whites at the Princess, remembers the balcony being segregated with the front section of seats reserved for whites, while the “back seats” were reserved for Blacks.²¹ The sections were called “first balcony” and “second balcony” to differentiate them. He also noted that it was unusual to have more than twenty Blacks in the upper balcony. The only time Blacks were allowed to sit in the first balcony was during “Free Movie” days, sometimes called “Bottle Cap Day”. These days, which were common movie promotions that occurred almost weekly during the 1960s across the United States granted admission with a set number of RC cola caps. Mr. Raybon recalls that on “Free Movie” days the balcony was not segregated. By the late 1960s one source remembers the balcony being completely segregated with whites all sitting downstairs.²² Leonard Raybon who worked at the Princess for almost a decade during the 1960s doesn’t recall the exact date that the theatre was desegregated. He does remember the entire balcony eventually being closed to the public and all Blacks being moved downstairs to sit in the main auditorium.



Figure 12: Segregated Princess auditorium, date unknown, courtesy Ellis Chenault.

²⁰ The city’s African American newspaper *The Guardian*, ceased publication in 1914, long before the Princess went through its 1941 remodel.

²¹ Leonard Raybon. Interviewed by Caroline Swope, July 21, 2025.

²² Peggy Towns. Interviewed by Caroline Swope, July 21, 2025.

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Local Black residents recalled the first time they accessed the Princess through the main entrance in 1969, after desegregation, to see a Jim Brown movie. One person remarked:

"It felt like someplace I didn't need to be." Another recalled "...I had never been through that door before... we went in and we sat down and ... I just turned around and looked back up ... at the balcony because I was trying to see what was so special about sitting right there <in the main auditorium> instead of sitting up <in the balcony> where you could see more.... It was kind of a sad feeling to me ... I thought about why I was there sitting in this place and where I had come from and why I was, I just, I didn't like it, you know."²³

Black patrons had their own bathroom on the mezzanine level, right off the blacks-only staircase, while white patron restrooms were on the main floor. Blacks could purchase concessions, but they were not allowed to access the main stairs in the theatre. They had to leave the second floor by the segregated staircase, exit the theatre, and then walk to the front of the theatre to purchase concessions. One resident recalls that popcorn could be purchased from a cart on the sidewalk.

The original segregated entrance from the 1941 remodel remains, located on the alley side of the theatre, just beyond the front façade. The signage no longer exists. Upon entering the door Black patrons were directed up the stairs to the second level and balcony seating. The segregated staircase and balcony still exist.²⁴ Most of the vestibules of segregation in Decatur; separate water fountains, bathrooms, schools, are no longer extant. The continued presence of a segregated entrance and seating area at the Princess is one of the few tangible reminders of the city's segregated history and struggle for Civil Rights.

Criterion C, Architecture:

In 1941 Decatur architect Albert Frahn was hired by Crescent Amusement to design the new Art Deco façade for the theatre. Frahn was a noted local architect. Although Crescent Amusement operated "Princess" theatres in Tennessee, Alabama, and Kentucky they used local architects for each building's design. Art Deco themes were selected for theaters that were built or remodeled around 1940. Theatres were often referred to as movie "palaces" with opulent interiors and cutting-edge technology for the day. They became shared social hubs, offering luxury and entertainment. The Princess with its striking Art Deco presence offered a contemporary design and technology-based entertainment that was not available elsewhere in the city. It is the only Art Deco building in Decatur. Its size, architectural style, and lavish use of Carrera Glass and neon lighting contribute to its iconic status within the city.

Art Deco, short for the French *Arts Decoratifs*, first appeared in Paris shortly before World War I, and flourished in the United States and Europe during the 1920s and 1930s, the design evoked the glamor of Hollywood and the rising movie industry. The style is characterized by geometric shapes, bold colors, and luxurious materials. During its zenith Art Deco represented luxury, glamour and faith in technological progress. The style often highlighted rare and expensive materials. The Princess showcases its Art Deco style through its rectangular massing with multicolored Carrara glass lines creating a series of concentric rectangles on the building's façade. The brightly colored Carrara glass is emphasized

²³ Mary Kelly, Pastor Woodall, and unnamed participants, "First Missionary Bible Study Group," interviewed by Deqah Hussein-Wetzel and Vanessa M. Quirk, January 10, 2023.

²⁴ The segregated bathroom is no longer extant. It was located in the small room to the west of the segregated staircase, right where the stairs ended. The room has been remodeled and is used for other purposes now.

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by the smooth stucco. The first floor is almost exclusively covered in black Carrara glass, with glass block used around the ticket booth. The massive marquee, which runs the length of the original theatre also runs the full height, stopping just above the front parapet before turning back, giving the illusion that it hangs down from the top of the front wall. The marquee is illuminated by more than a mile of neon tubes and more than 400 exposed bulbs turn the underside of the marquee into a sparkling canopy above event attendee's heads. There are only three other operating Art Deco theatres in Alabama: Talledega's Ritz Theater (1937), Tuscaloosa's Bama Theatre (1938), and Greenville's Ritz Theatre (1935). Talledega's theatre is the only one to rival The Princess. It has a striking Carrera glass façade in black, green, and red geometric panels.

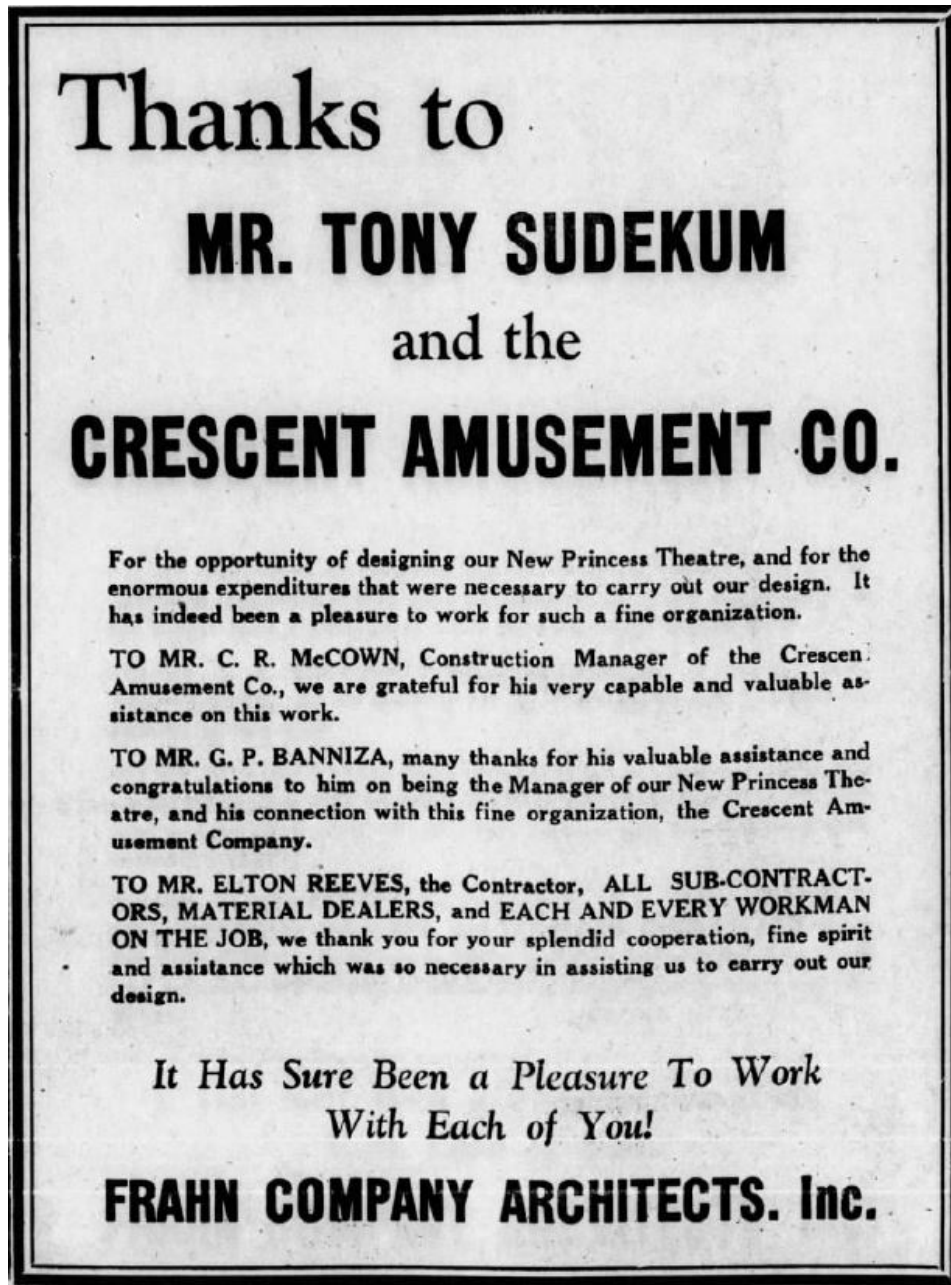


Figure 13: *The Decatur Daily*, August 6, 1941, pg 4.

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The interior of the Princess has significant Art Deco detailing. The entry lobby has inlaid terrazzo floors, staircases sport curved metal geometric banisters. The paneling upstairs and downstairs lobby is Lacewood. The theatre has recessed panels in the auditorium that have Art Deco curves at the juncture with the lower wall. Decorative wall designs are similar to those show in the vintage photos. The proscenium, while simple has large curved walls, emphasizing the geometric nature of the space. The second-floor balcony has the original low metal railing with curved design elements.

9. Major Bibliographic References

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

Bassett, Augustus, "Letter to the Editor" *The Decatur Daily*, August 8, 1941, pg 8.

<https://cinematreasures.org/theaters/united-states/alabama/decaturn>

Kelly, Mary, Pastor Woodall, and unnamed participants, "First Missionary Bible Study Group," interviewed by Deqah Hussein-Wetzel and Vanessa M. Quirk, January 10, 2023.

Lord Aeck Sargent, "Historic Structure Report, Princess Theatre." July 25, 2022. Report copies archived in Historic Preservation and Park and Recreation Files.

n.a. "Crescent Amusement Co. Saga Follow Industry Closely" *The Tennessean*. February 24, 1952, pg 64.

n.a. "Famous Movie Lion Arrives Here Tuesday" *The Decatur Daily*, March 18, 1929, pg. 5.

n.a. "Interest High In Carver Address" *The Decatur Daily*, May 29, 1935, pg 3.

n.a. "New Dress For Princess" *The Decatur Daily*, February 15, 1941, pg 2.

n.a. "New Princess Theatre Will Open Thursday Night" *The Decatur Daily*, August 6, 1941, pg 1 and 4.

n.a. "New Theatre Is Names Princess, Malone States" *The Albany Decatur Daily*, September 4, 1919, pg 1.

n.a. "Princess Lot Has A First" *The Decatur Daily*, November 16, 1958, pg 5.

n.a. "Princess Theatre One Of Prettiest In South To Open With Play Tonight" *The Albany-Decatur Daily*, December 30, 1919, pg 1.

n.a. "Princess Theatre To Open Early in December" *The Albany-Decatur Daily*, October 29, 1941, pg 5.

n.a. "Princess Theatre Will Open Dec. 30" *The Albany-Decatur Daily*, December 11, 1919, pg 1.

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n.a. "Princess To Close Soon" *The Decatur Daily*, January 11, 1941, pg 5.

n.a. "Remodeled Princes Theatre May Be Re-Opened By June 15, Manager States" *The Decatur Daily*, April 5, 1941, pg 2.

n.a. "Western Union", *The Decatur Daily*, August 6, 194, pg 6.

n.a. "Work Begins On Theatre" *The Decatur Daily*, November 12, 1940, pg. 1-2.

n.a. "Work Rushed On Princess Theatre" *The Albany-Decatur Daily*, November 14, 1941, pg 1.

Raybon, Leonard. Interviewed by Caroline Swope, July 21, 2025.

Thornton, Melissa Ford *The Princess Theatre: A Grand Old Dame*, no location, Integrated Communications Inc., 2023.

Towns, Peggy. Interviewed by Caroline Swope, July 21, 2025.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | State Historic Preservation Office |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other State agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Federal agency |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Local government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other |
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.22 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84:	
----------------------------	--

Enter coordinates to 6 decimal places.

1. Latitude: 34.604603

Longitude: -86.984178

OR

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UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
5. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property) Lot is bordered by 2nd Avenue NE on the west (front), Holly Street NE on the north, an additional parking lot to the east, and an alley to the south.

Boundary Justification

(explain why the boundaries were selected)

Boundaries are those of the parcel that has been associated with the Princess since at least 1953 based on Sanborn maps. This includes the parking lot to the rear that supported the theatre. The parking lot that extends to the east, outside the nomination boundaries, which terminates at 4th Avenue, was the location of a separate commercial building that faced 4th Avenue. That building, which originally served a bottling factory, had its own associated parking. Google StreetView images from 2013 show a separate commercial building on that lot as recently as 2013. The adjacent building to the north of the Princess, that now serves as the Princess' lobby, is included because its interior was linked to the Princess in 1999.

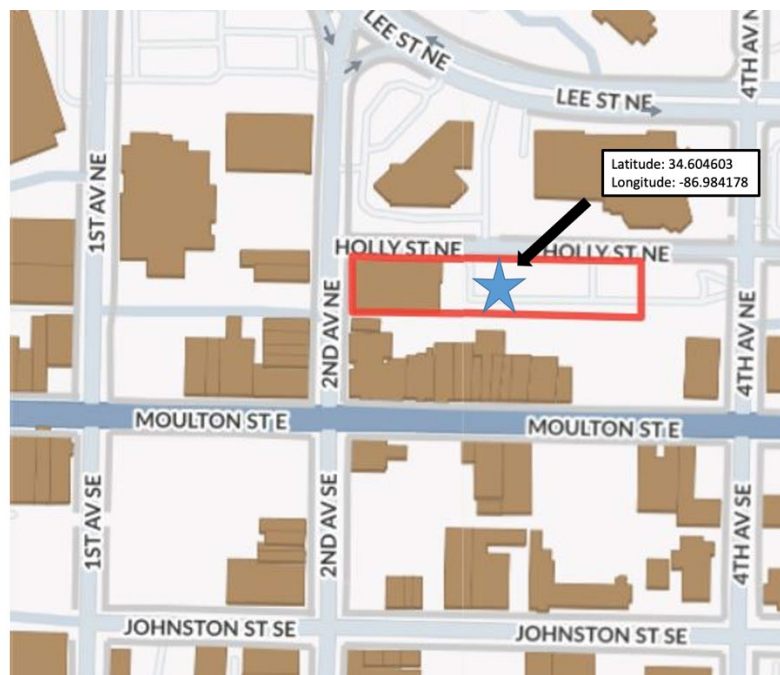


Figure 14: Latitude and Longitude coordinates

11. Form prepared by:

Name/Title: Caroline Swope, M.S.H.P., Ph.D. Historic Preservation Specialist for the City of Decatur

Organization: City of Decatur

Street & number: 402 Lee Street

Princess Theatre
Name of Property

Morgan, AL
County and State

City/Town: Decatur State: AL Zip Code: 35601

Email: cswope@decatur-al.gov Phone: 256-476-7520

Date: June 20, 2025

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Photographs

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

Photo Log

Name or Property: Princess Theatre
City or Vicinity: Decatur
County: Morgan State: AL
Photographer: Patrick Hood

Date Photographed: 2025

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

- Photo 1 of 31: Front façade, photographer facing northeast
Photo 2 of 31: Front façade, photographer facing northeast, detail
Photo 3 of 31: Front façade, entry, photographer facing northeast
Photo 4 of 31: Front façade, entry, photographer facing southeast, detail
Photo 5 of 31: Front façade, auxiliary building, photographer facing east
Photo 6 of 31: Oblique, photographer facing southeast
Photo 7 of 31: Oblique, photographer facing southwest
Photo 8 of 31: Rear elevation, photographer facing west
Photo 9 of 31: Oblique, photographer facing northwest
Photo 10 of 31: South elevation, detail
Photo 11 of 31: South elevation, photographer facing northeast
Photo 12 of 31: South elevation, detail of segregated entry, photographer facing north
Photo 13 of 31: Historic lobby, photographer facing southeast
Photo 14 of 31: Historic lobby, photographer facing north
Photo 15 of 31: Historic lobby, detail of terrazzo floor

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Photo 16 of 31: Auditorium, photographer facing east
Photo 17 of 31: Auditorium, photographer facing west
Photo 18 of 31: Back stage, photographer facing south
Photo 19 of 31: New lobby, photographer facing northwest
Photo 20 of 31: New lobby, photographer facing southeast
Photo 21 of 31: Rear of new lobby, photographer facing northeast
Photo 22 of 31: Staircase to mezzanine level, photographer facing south to first floor
Photo 23 of 31: Mezzanine level, photographer facing south
Photo 24 of 31: Mezzanine level, detail of lacewood, photographer facing south
Photo 25 of 31: Mezzanine level, photographer facing southeast towards first floor
Photo 26 of 31: Second floor, photographer facing southeast
Photo 27 of 31: Second floor, photographer facing northwest
Photo 28 of 31: Second floor, back of house, photographer facing southeast
Photo 29 of 31: Second floor, stage from balcony, photographer facing east
Photo 30 of 31: Second floor, detail of balcony seating
Photo 31 of 31: Second floor, detail of balcony railing

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

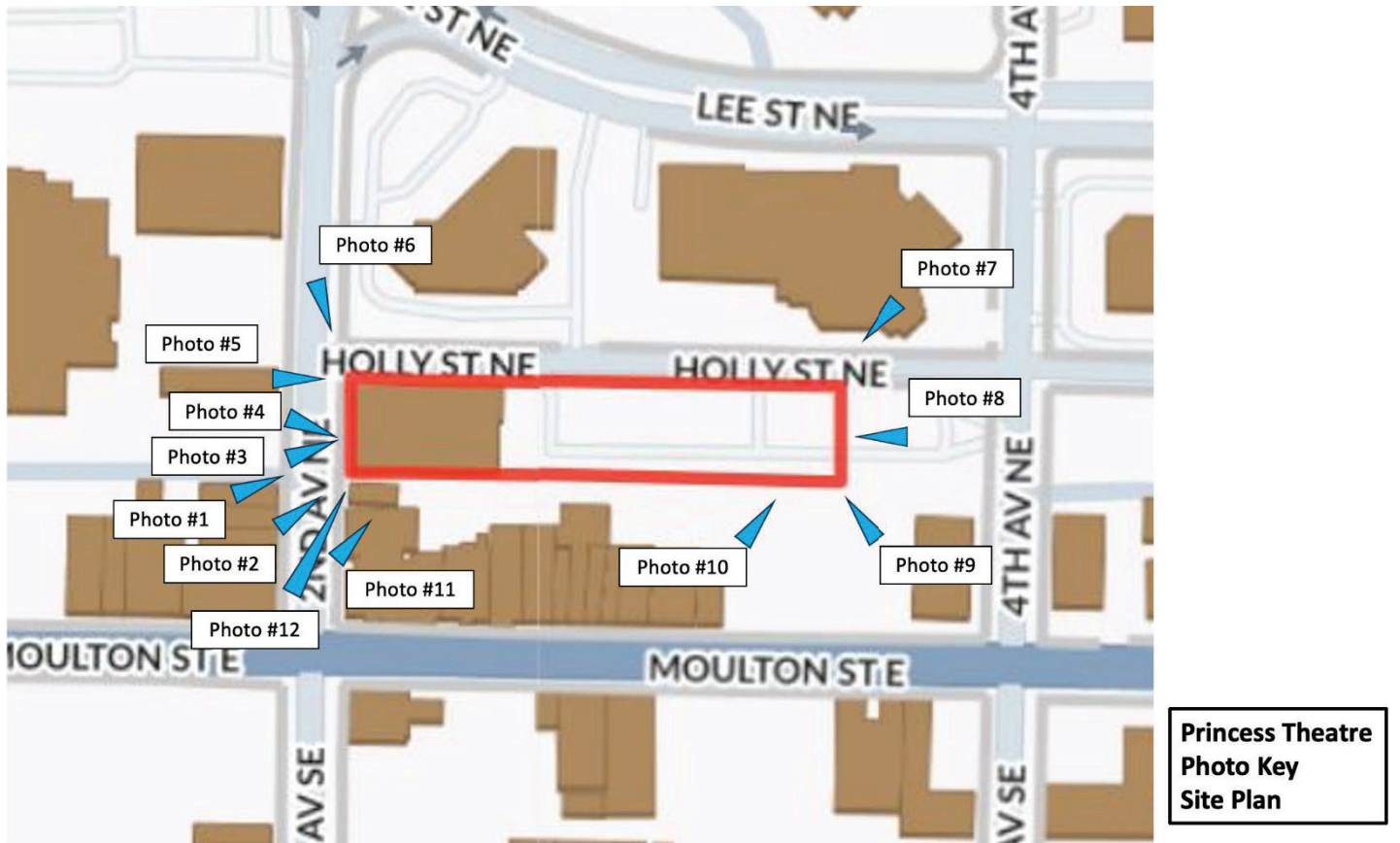
Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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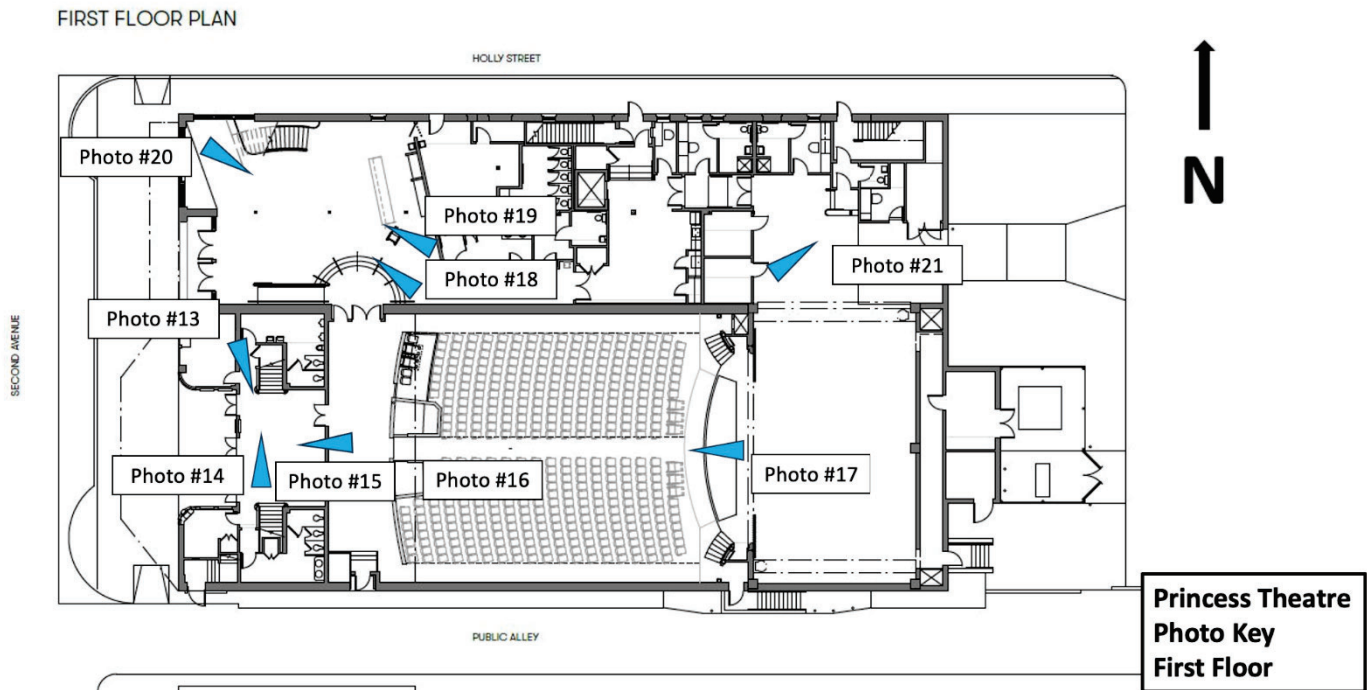
Exterior Photo Key



Princess Theatre
Name of Property

Morgan, AL
County and State

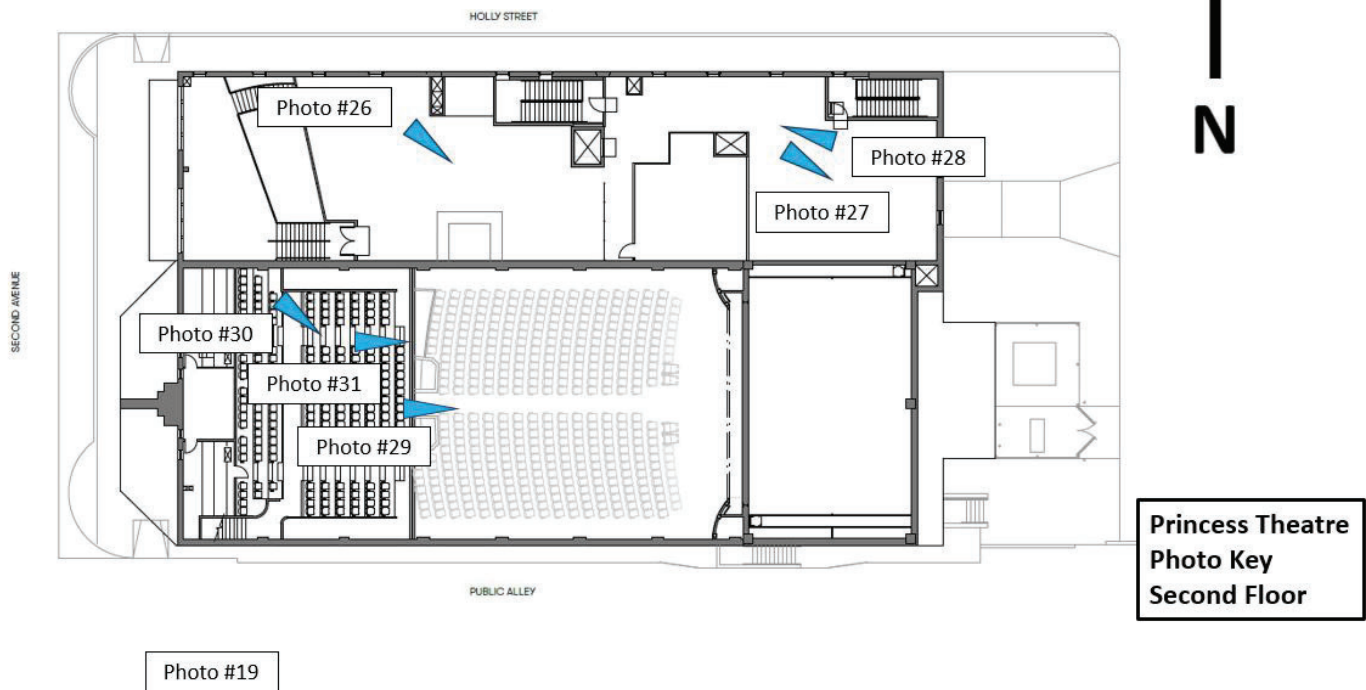
Interior photo keys



Princess Theatre
Name of Property

Morgan, AL
County and State

SECOND FLOOR PLAN



Princess Theatre
Name of Property

Morgan, AL
County and State

MEZZANINE FLOOR PLAN

