

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NR Listed
4-16-11

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Maxie Theatre

other names/site number PO0199

2. Location

street & number 136 AR 463 South

not for publication

city or town Trumann

vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Poinsett code 111 zip code 72472

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination
request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets
does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant

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

Catherine Meuthis

3/23/11

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the
National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the
National Register.

removed from the National
Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Maxie Theatre
Name of Property

Poinsett County, Arkansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

Contributing

Noncontributing

1	buildings
_____	sites
_____	structures
_____	objects
1	Total

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

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls STUCCO, BRICK, STONE

roof OTHER/Tar Built-up

other

Narrative Description

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

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.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

LOCAL

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1947

Significant Dates

1947

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Zell Jaynes, Lonnie Jaynes & John Hurd, builders

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
Previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State Agency
Federal Agency
Local Government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Maxie Theatre
Name of Property

Poinsett County, Arkansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u> Zone	<u>724793</u> Easting	<u>3950262</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rachel Silva, Preservation Outreach Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date March 23, 2011
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9788
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name Jack and Pauline Noel
street & number 1200 Reed Street telephone 870-483-7040
city or town Trumann state AR zip code 72472

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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SUMMARY

The Maxie Theatre formally opened on the afternoon of August 20, 1947. Located on Highway 63 (now AR 463 South), the Maxie Theatre was "one of the best equipped [theatres] in Northeast Arkansas" at that time.³ Original owners Zell Jaynes, Lonnie Jaynes, and John Hurd sought to construct a state-of-the-art, modern theatre, complete with upholstered seats, carpeted aisles, an air washer air conditioning system, and germicidal lights. The men spent about \$90,000 to build and furnish the theatre. In keeping with the owners' desire to use the most cutting-edge equipment, the theatre building was designed in the Art Deco style of architecture, which represented a break from traditional styles and an emphasis on modernism and the design of the future. Jack and Pauline Noel purchased the Maxie Theatre in 1958 and continue to operate the theatre today. Under the Noels' ownership, few changes have been made to the building. The Maxie Theatre is an excellent example of the Art Deco style in Trumann and represents a rare example of a single-screen movie theatre in northeast Arkansas.

ELABORATION

The Maxie Theatre is located on AR 463 South, just southeast of its intersection with West Main Street in Trumann, Poinsett County, Arkansas. Construction of the theatre began in July 1946, and its formal opening was held on August 20, 1947. A movie theatre operated on Main Street in Trumann by 1926, but John Hurd and brothers Zell and Lonnie Jaynes sought to build a state-of-the-art, modern theatre. They included every possible convenience, including upholstered chairs, carpeted aisles, an air washer air conditioning system, germicidal lights, indoor restrooms and drinking fountains, a Super Simplex Projector, and a Four Star Sound System. In the end, the original owners spent about \$90,000 to build and furnish the theatre. The theatre was open seven days a week, and movies changed every few days. The Maxie Theatre quickly became the main source of entertainment in Trumann. In keeping with the owners' desire to use the most cutting-edge equipment, the theatre building was designed in the Art Deco style of architecture, which represented a break from traditional styles and an emphasis on modernism and the design of the future. Jack and Pauline Noel purchased the Maxie Theatre in 1958 and continue to operate the theatre today. Under the Noels' ownership, few changes have been made to the building. The Maxie Theatre is an excellent example of the Art Deco style in Trumann and represents a rare example of a single-screen movie theatre in northeast Arkansas.

The Maxie Theatre is a rectangular, one-story building and rests on a continuous, cast-concrete foundation. The theatre has a flat, built-up tar roof with a modest tile-capped parapet. The theatre exhibits restrained Art Deco-style detailing on its southwest (front) façade. Characteristics of the Art Deco style include the front elevation's smooth stucco finish, pilasters projecting above the roofline to provide a vertical emphasis, and the theatre's original marquee with the name "Maxie" on two sides and a letter "M" crowned by a small vertical projection in the center.

³ "Maxie Theatre to Open Here Next Wednesday," *Trumann Democrat* 15 August 1947, p. 1.

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Southwest Façade (Front)

The upper portion of the southwest (front) façade is finished in smooth stucco. A wide, graduated pilaster is located in the center of the façade and slightly projects above the roofline. Two narrower, paired pilasters are situated on either side of the large central pilaster and also project above the roofline. The pilasters provide a vertical emphasis on the building's front façade. The Maxie Theatre still retains its original marquee, which forms a one-story porch above the building's recessed, central entrance. The marquee has three exposed sides. The side elevations provide space for movie titles and show times, and the name "Maxie" is spelled out in large neon letters above each side elevation. The marquee's central elevation features a large letter "M" crowned by a small vertical projection mimicking the wide central pilaster on the building's front façade.

The lower portion of the building's southwest façade was covered with a fieldstone veneer at an unknown date (maybe during the mid-1970s). When the Noels could not replace a broken piece around the poster display cases, they had the lower portion of the front façade covered with a fieldstone veneer; however none of the original openings were changed. The lower portion of the front façade was originally finished with stucco and had four display cases for movie posters or "one-sheets" as they are called by current owner Jack Noel. Two cases held full-size posters, and two cases held a board with eight 11" x 14" slots for movie advertisements. Two poster display cases were situated on either side of the recessed front entrance. The theatre had a central recessed entrance with two sets of double doors and a ticket window. The original wood doors were painted red and each had a crescent moon cut-out in its upper half, but these have since been replaced with single-light, aluminum-frame glass doors (the building retains the same door openings). Currently, one poster display case is situated on each side of the recessed entrance instead of the original two on each side. The theatre still has its original ticket window, and the central recessed bay and front door openings are the same. Although the wall material on the lower portion of the façade is not original and the front doors have been replaced with aluminum-frame glass doors, the theatre's street-level façade retains its original configuration. The absence of one poster display case on either side of the front entrance does not detract from the building's integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling because these poster cases were never openings in the theatre's façade; rather, they were mounted to the exterior. With its basic configuration intact, the building's street-level façade still reflects the design and feeling of a mid-twentieth century movie theatre.

Northwest Façade (Side)

The northwest (side) façade is red brick laid in common bond with seventh course headers, meaning that after every sixth row of stretchers (brick laid so its longest side is visible), there is a row of headers (brick laid so its end is visible). The roofline features a stepped, tile-capped parapet. A single door opening topped by a simple, cast-concrete panel has been bricked in near the building's southwest corner. This door served as the entrance for African-American patrons until the late 1960s when the Maxie Theatre was integrated.

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Northeast Façade (Rear)

The northeast (rear) façade has a small concrete block addition with a hipped roof. This room was constructed sometime before 1957 to house the equipment for an air refrigeration unit, which is still in use. This concrete block room has a set of solid double doors on its southeast side. A large, boarded opening is situated in the upper half of the rear façade on either side of the addition. These openings are crowned by simple, cast-concrete lintels and served as the original air washer air conditioning system. There were two large louvered vents, each with a tank of water mounted below it. The water sprayed up on the louvered vents to cool the incoming air and ran back down to the tank to recirculate. This system was replaced sometime before 1957 when the Noels purchased the theatre. Doors are located below each boarded opening on the rear façade, one a single door and the other a set of double doors. A wooden privacy fence surrounds a portion of the rear façade to help secure the entrance to the air refrigeration equipment room.

Southeast Façade (Side)

The southeast (side) façade is red brick laid in common bond with seventh course headers. The roofline features a stepped, tile-capped parapet. This façade is devoid of fenestration.

Interior

The theatre lobby is one open room with a snack bar on the northwest side of the room. The original candy counter remains part of the snack bar, and a small casement window remains in the back of the snack bar where African-American patrons would order refreshments before integration. From the lobby, there are doors going to an office for theatre personnel, the former African-American entrance and ticket counter, two doors entering the auditorium, ladies' and men's restrooms, and the balcony. The theatre lobby currently houses portable shelves of VHS videos, which remain from the Noels video rental business. In 1985 they added the video rental business to provide additional income, but have since stopped renting movies. Decorative metal and glass signs remain in the lobby above the restroom and balcony entrances, reading "Ladies," "Men," and "Balcony."

The auditorium is accessed by two doors in the lobby. A small partition is located just inside the auditorium to block light coming from the lobby, and patrons walk around this wall as they enter the auditorium. The balcony, which is situated above the lobby, is still open (but is no longer used for seating). Two narrow aisles extend the length of the auditorium toward the screen. The auditorium retains its original upholstered seats (both downstairs and in the balcony) and Art Deco-style light fixtures. The light fixtures are made from four semi-circular pieces of metal arranged vertically from large to small with a projecting floral design at the bottom. The interior walls of the theatre feature two large murals painted between 1947 and 1957 by a transient artist who came through Trumann looking for work. The murals depict island scenes with

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mountains, palm trees, the ocean, and sailboats. A new stage and screen were installed in the 1970s, but the original stage and screen track remain behind the newer screen. Most of the original projection equipment is still used to show movies at the Maxie, with the exception of the lighting equipment. An air refrigeration unit replaced the original air washer air conditioning system sometime prior to 1957 and is still used to cool the theatre.⁴

INTEGRITY

The Maxie Theatre remains almost the same as it has for the last sixty-four years. The theatre's appearance was altered slightly by the application of fieldstone veneer on the lower portion of the building's front façade; however, the original door and ticket window openings remain intact. Because Jack and Pauline Noel have owned and operated the theatre since 1958, they have tried to maintain the historic integrity of the building as much as possible. They still use much of the original projection equipment as well as the 1950s-era air refrigeration system. The theatre retains integrity of location and setting, as it is still located in a commercial area of Trumann with ample parking around the building for theatre patrons. Because the Maxie Theatre still shows movies on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights, it retains excellent integrity of feeling and association. The Maxie Theatre holds a special place in the hearts of Trumann residents because many of them grew up watching movies there and now take their children and grandchildren to movies at the Maxie.

⁴ Jack and Pauline Noel, interview by author, 9 June 2010, Trumann, Arkansas.

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SUMMARY

Trumann, located in northern Poinsett County, developed as a result of the Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company (PL&M). PL&M established a manufacturing plant and veneer mill in Trumann in 1911. The company quickly established itself as the center of daily life in Trumann. Over half of the population of Trumann worked for the company at the mill and in the woods. The company whistle ordered daily activities and the company provided the town's electricity, water, school, and fire service. Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company employees sat on the city government. PL&M was Trumann and the people of Trumann often referred to the company as "Ma Singer," after its parent company, Singer Manufacturing Company.

The Maxie Theatre opened in Trumann on August 20, 1947, and was one of the most modern, state-of-the-art theatres in northeast Arkansas. It boasted upholstered seats, carpeted aisles, an air washer air conditioning system, a Super Simplex Projector, Four Star Sound System, indoor restrooms and water fountains, and germicidal lights to prevent the spread of cold and flu germs. Amenities like these were essential to securing the patronage of local residents because there were competing theatres in nearby towns, including Shady Grove, Promised Land, Lunsford, Harrisburg, Marked Tree, and Lepanto, not to mention the Grand Theatre in Trumann. In keeping with the owners' desire to use the most cutting-edge equipment, the theatre building was designed in the Art Deco style of architecture, which represented a break from traditional styles and an emphasis on modernism and the design of the future. The Maxie Theatre represents a unique example of a single-screen movie theatre in northeast Arkansas and continues to show movies three days a week. It is an excellent example of the Art Deco style of architecture in Trumann as well. The Maxie Theatre is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C** with **local significance** for its Art Deco design.

ELABORATION

Trumann is located in northern Poinsett County in Arkansas's Mississippi River Delta. Poinsett County was established on February 27, 1838, from parts of Lawrence and St. Francis counties. The county was named in honor of Joel Roberts Poinsett, the horticulturist who introduced the poinsettia flower to the United States. Poinsett was also a friend of Arkansas Congressman Archibald Yell and served as Secretary of War under President Martin Van Buren.⁵

The Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company established a manufacturing plant and veneer mill in Trumann in 1911. The company quickly established itself as the center of daily life in Trumann. Over half

⁵ Clyde Ford, "Poinsett County," Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture; Internet, available from <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=799#>; accessed 17 June 2010.

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of the population of Trumann worked for the company at the mill and in the woods. The company whistle ordered daily activities and the company provided the town's electricity, water, school, and fire service. Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company (PL&M) employees sat on the city government. PL&M was Trumann and the people of Trumann often referred to the company as "Ma Singer," after its parent company, Singer Manufacturing Company.⁶

Prior to the arrival of the Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company, the small, unnamed spot hidden in the deep woods of the Arkansas Delta was home to the sawmill of G. R. Minnick and Company. The mill and village came into existence as the location of a spur on the Kansas City, Fort Scott, and Memphis Railroad in 1883. Interestingly, what we now see as thousands of acres of cultivated, treeless land was heavily forested. By the early 1890s, the swampy woods of east Arkansas became attractive to northern and mid-western lumbermen looking to replace cut-over lands in other parts of the country. In 1889, a writer for Goodspeed Publishing Company wrote, "the lumbering industry of Poinsett County is and will be a great source of income."⁷

By 1894 there was a lumber mill in the vicinity of what would become Trumann. The Springfield Cooperage Company bought up timberlands and used a tram railroad to bring lumber to its barrel manufacturing operation. At that time the place was colloquially known as Mosher; named after one of the company's managers. Two years later the town applied for and received a post office under the name of Mosher.

In 1902 Mosher sold his interest in the company and left town. The local population lost interest in celebrating Mosher and changed the name of the town to Weona—a lumber company in the area. The post office took the new name but the railroad did not, and the town was known by two names. Not surprisingly, there was a good bit of confusion. It took two years but in 1904, the Postmaster and the railroad compromised and the name was changed to Trumann.⁸

In 1903 the Singer Manufacturing Company acquired the mill and timber holdings of the Minnick Company. It continued to acquire timberlands in Poinsett, Cross, and Lee counties in Arkansas as well as some timberlands in Louisiana. By 1911 the Singer Manufacturing Company held over 150,000 acres of land. Singer Manufacturing Company formed a wholly owned subsidiary, the Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company, in 1911 to begin harvesting these timberlands. Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing was, like its

⁶ Larry and Georgia Henderson, "Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company Manager's House, Trumann, Poinsett County, Arkansas," edited by Van Zbinden; National Register of Historic Places Registration Form in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (2009).

⁷ Goodspeed Publishing Company, *The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northeast Arkansas* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1889; reprint, Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1978); 575.

⁸ Poinsett County Historical Society, *Poinsett County History and Families* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Co., 1998); 143. Hereafter referred to as PCHS. See also, Russell Pierce Baker, *From Memdag to Norsk: A Historical Directory of Arkansas Post Offices, 1832-1971* (Hot Springs: Arkansas Genealogical Society, 1988); 153, 221, 233.

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parent company, chartered in the state of New Jersey. Operations began in 1912 and were primarily concerned with the initial stages of raw material preparation. Logs and unfinished lumber were brought to the mill at Trumann by the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad or by the company's own Arkansas Short Line Railroad.⁹

Certainly, there was a lively town prior to the establishment of the Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company. With the cooperage mill there was sufficient local income to support the dry goods stores of the Mitchell Brothers and Wood and Warren. At the beginning of the twentieth century the town saw a number of business additions including the general store of Robert S. Lady and the Trumann Ice and Coal Company. While this early business development grew in association with the success of the cooperage mill, it was not directly connected. However, the first doctors in town were company physicians for the Springfield Cooperage Company. Dr. George O. Campbell arrived in Trumann in 1902 and served as the doctor for both the sawmill and the town.¹⁰

Trumann grew into a company town. After PL&M began operations they gradually made additions to their operations and to the City of Trumann. Throughout these early years of operation the plant and its associated buildings grew rapidly. The Singer sewing machines were immensely popular not only in the United States but around the world. Production at plants in South Bend, Indiana; Cairo, Illinois; Elizabeth, New Jersey, and others, numbered in the thousands of units per week. Like all traditional company towns, Trumann virtually became the property of Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company.

Poinsett Lumber constructed a number of four-room houses for its employees with families. These four-room houses were once so ubiquitous that the road now known as Speedway was once called 4-Room Row. In addition to the single family homes and duplexes, PL&M built two boarding houses for unmarried employees and visiting managers. An employee who began work at the company in 1947 remembers that there was one boarding house for female employees and one for males; each of these was furnished with "Western Stickley Furniture."¹¹ They were nicknamed the Boy's Clubhouse and the Girl's Clubhouse. The Girl's Club was on South Main at the end of the extension of Gum Street. The Boy's Club was in the middle of the block on Elm between Harrison Avenue and South Main Street. Each was adjacent to the mill on its southwest corner.¹²

⁹ Ray Knight, Edward Mitchell, and John Sadler, "Poinsett Community Club," 8 September 1986, TD, National Register of Historic Places nomination on file at the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Also, Bettye Sue Boyd, "The Singer Company - Wood Products Division, How it Began - How it Grew," *Craighead County Historical Quarterly* Volume VI, No. 4 (Autumn 1968); 12; and PCHS, 143.

¹⁰ PCHS, 143.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹² Sanborn Map Company, *Truman June 1926, Sheet 2* [map]. 1 inch=50 feet. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926.

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These four-room houses were in three additions to the City of Trumann platted by the Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company. Each of the three additions was adjacent to the mill and included much of the company housing and company buildings. Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company's first addition to the city was bounded by Front Street on the east, South Main on the north, Poinsett Avenue on the west, and Harrison Avenue on the south. The second addition was larger than the first and triangular in shape. It was bounded by Poinsett Avenue and the mill on the east, Harrison Avenue on the south, and the city limits at Pine Street (originally West Avenue) on the west. The third addition was located on the northwest side of the mill and was only four blocks, bounded on the east by Parkway Avenue, on the north by Speedway, and on the west by Pine Street (originally West Avenue). Each of these additions to the City of Trumann was platted by 1926.¹³

Poinsett Lumber Company's first addition was directly across from the railroad freight house on Front Street. It included much of the non-company related growth in the city, including several commercial buildings. It was here that the drug store, auto mechanic, movie theatre, and grocery stores were located. This addition also included the Methodist Episcopal Church. Each of the additions is similar in housing stock; small four-room houses with front and back porches interspersed with long shotgun houses. Lots in the first and second addition are larger than those in the third; the third being the most densely populated addition and the most industrial addition. The third addition was the only Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing addition with integral, company-maintained fire hose stations. In 1926 PL&M's second addition was largely empty with company houses along Poinsett Avenue and West Avenue. The northern portion of this addition would become the location of the Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company Manager's House (built in 1935; NR-listed 1/21/2010).¹⁴

Aside from designing and platting several large portions of the town of Trumann the lumber company provided a number of community services. From the start of operations in 1912 to the installation of a municipally-owned water system in 1951, Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company provided water for the town of Trumann. It was not cheap; the company charged \$2.00 a month regardless of how much water was used. PL&M also provided electricity to the city, prior to the arrival of Arkansas Power & Light. In 1912 the company provided the funding for the construction of a new brick school building. In 1925 the company built the Poinsett Community Club which was open to all the citizens of Trumann with an annual membership fee of fifty cents per year. In a town where approximately half of the people worked for one company, it is not surprising that many of the city's officials also worked for Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company. One man strongly encouraged his employees to take active roles in city government and making the town of Trumann a great place to live. In fact, this man, as superintendent of the

¹³ Sanborn Map Company, *Truman, June 1926 Sheet 1* [map], 1 inch=600 feet. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926.

¹⁴ Sanborn Map Company, *Truman, June 1926* [map], 1 inch=50 feet. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926.

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mill, was largely responsible for many of the decisions that defined Trumann. His name was Alfred Carlson.¹⁵

Alfred Carlson was called "the Count" because of the control he had over the town. Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company was referred to by most people in Trumann as, and remains to this day nicknamed, Ma Singer. Carlson came to the plant about 1922 as an engineer hired to supervise the installation of new veneer finishing equipment. He was born in Bear Lake, Michigan, in 1885, and received his degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Michigan in 1912. After joining the Singer Manufacturing Company in 1919, at South Bend, Indiana, he was quickly promoted. In 1925 Carlson was promoted to General Superintendent of the Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company and in 1935 was promoted to Works Superintendent. Both of these promotions put Carlson at the head of the company. The latter placed him in charge of all the company's operations in Arkansas and Louisiana.¹⁶

Carlson was an active man who apparently took genuine interest in his employees and the quality of life in Trumann. He actively fought corruption within the company and within both city and county government and urged his employees to take an active role in local government. Yet, he was a company man and was therefore anti-union. When the union went on strike at the plant in South Bend, Indiana, he began manufacturing cabinets in the plant at Trumann to show the union that the company could continue operations without their plant. His work was once rewarded with an assassination attempt that left a bullet wound in his chest. It is unknown if it was his anti-union stance or his fight against local corruption and lawlessness that won him this unwanted award.¹⁷

Long term operation of the plant in Trumann was one of Carlson's key objectives. At its peak the company employed 2,500 people in Trumann. Indeed, this was fewer than the 3,000 people employed at Singer's South Bend Plant and not even half of the 7,000 at the Elizabeth, New Jersey, plant but these positions were immensely important locally. During slow periods in production Carlson would begin updating the mill facilities to keep employees at work. He was known to receive permission to repair a building and in the process would completely rebuild the structure. In the 1940s and 1950s when sales slowed Singer called for company-wide lay-offs, including at Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company. Company managers were called to New York to present their lay-off plans and cost saving plans. Carlson went with a plan to update facilities, reduce labor costs, and maintain employees. A new assembly plant, veneer drying building, and shipping plant followed.¹⁸

¹⁵ PCHS, 144.

¹⁶ Dallas T. Herndon, Ed., *Annals of Arkansas, 1947* (Little Rock, AR: The Historical Record Association, 1947), 1333. Also, PCHS, 144.

¹⁷ Herndon, 1333; PCHS, 144.

¹⁸ PCHS, 144.

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It was under Carlson's direction and with his modernization efforts that in 1930 the work of the Cairo, Illinois, Singer veneer mill was moved to Trumann. Manufacturing of finished cabinets began in 1937. A second modernization program began in 1949 that culminated in winning the production of cabinets from the South Bend plant in 1954 (the South Bend plant was subsequently closed). In 1959, the Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing plant at Trumann became the only Singer woodworking operation in the United States. PL&M never reached the capacity of the South Bend plant, which at one point had a capacity of 10,000 cabinets per day, but it did produce a respectable 750 cabinets of the 40 and 56 models per week in the late 1940s.¹⁹

Though it was a wholly owned subsidiary of the Singer Manufacturing Company, the Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company operated as its own company. With manufacturing plants in Trumann and Helena, Arkansas, and timberlands in Arkansas and Louisiana, it was a sizable operation.

In the late 1930s Arkansas Power and Light brought commercial electricity to Trumann. In 1948 the four-room and shotgun company houses were sold to the employees. In 1951 the city of Trumann began operating its own water and sewer system. For the next few decades the Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company gradually became just a manufacturing plant in the town of Trumann. In 1963 the Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company was formally merged with the Singer Company, becoming The Singer Company—Wood Products Division.²⁰ Certainly, the plant continued a very successful and important operation, employing 1,700 and making approximately 23,207,550 square feet of veneer in 1968 alone.²¹ By the early 1980s the Singer Company was more focused on diversification and the electronics field. No longer convinced of the necessity of the Wood Products Division, the Singer Corporation closed the plant at Trumann in 1982.

By 1926 the Grand Theatre was located on Main Street in Trumann near the railroad tracks. But when Trumann entrepreneur Zell Jaynes returned from serving 3 ½ years in the U.S. Army in Germany during World War II, he partnered with his brother, Lonnie, and John Hurd to build "a better theatre" for local residents.²² The Jaynes brothers operated several businesses in Trumann over the years, including a taxi service, liquor store, the Allis-Chalmers tractor dealership, and the Maxie Theatre. Construction began on the theatre in July 1946, and the Maxie Theatre formally opened on the afternoon of August 20, 1947. The original owners spent about \$90,000 to construct and furnish the theatre with the most modern, state-of-the-art equipment available at that time. According to Zell Jaynes shortly before the theatre's grand opening,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*; Boyd, 12, 13.

²⁰ Boyd, 13.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

²² "Maxie Theatre to Open Here Next Wednesday," *Trumann Democrat* 15 August 1947, p. 1.

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"No convenience has been overlooked, nor has any expense been spared to construct the finest picture show in this section."²³

The Maxie Theatre boasted upholstered seats, carpeted aisles, an air washer air conditioning system, a Super Simplex Projector, Four Star Sound System, indoor restrooms and water fountains, germicidal lights to prevent the spread of cold and flu germs, and an elaborate curtain in front of the screen.²⁴ Amenities like these were essential to securing the patronage of local residents because there were competing theatres in nearby towns, including Shady Grove, Promised Land, Lunsford, Harrisburg, Marked Tree, and Lepanto, not to mention the Grand Theatre in Trumann. In keeping with the owners' desire to use the most cutting-edge equipment, the theatre building was designed in the Art Deco style of architecture, which represented a break from traditional styles and an emphasis on modernism and the design of the future. Movies were the main form of entertainment before everyone had a television at home. The Maxie Theatre seated 673 people, and movies changed every few days.²⁵

The theatre also advertised a "special gallery" for "colored persons."²⁶ A single door on the theatre's northwest façade (now bricked-in) served as the entrance for African-American patrons until the late 1960s when the Maxie Theatre integrated. African-Americans entered through this side door, purchased tickets through a window in the rear of the ticket booth, and ordered refreshments through another window in the back of the concession area. Then they climbed the back staircase to the balcony, where one section of seats was blocked off with a partition. They were only allowed to sit in this section.²⁷

Jack and Pauline Noel purchased the Maxie Theatre in 1958 and continue to operate it. Since he was ten years old, Jack Noel's ambition in life was to work in a movie theatre. He started working in theatres as a child in Texas so he could get in to see the movies for free. When the Noels moved to Trumann in 1956, they leased the old Grand Theatre on Main Street from Jap Singleton. At that time, a man named Lloyd Hutchins leased the Maxie Theatre from Zell Jaynes, but Hutchins decided to return to his home state of Oklahoma to work. Noel managed the Maxie Theatre in Hutchins's absence. And after Hutchins was killed in a tragic automobile accident, Noel finished out the terms of Hutchins's lease and purchased the Maxie Theatre in 1958. In 1957 movie prices at the Maxie were 15 cents for children and 25 cents for adults. Popcorn was 10, 15, or 25 cents for a small, medium, or large bag. The Maxie often featured continuous showings on Sundays, where a movie would only be shown for one day. It was usually a "shoot-em-up

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*; "Grand Opening of New Maxie Theater Set for July First," *Trumann Democrat* 11 April 1947, p. 1.

²⁵ Ruth Ann Estes, "Maxie Theatre Celebrates 60th Anniversary," *Poinsett County Democrat Tribune* 22 August 2007, p. 1 & 7.

²⁶ "Maxie Theatre to Open Here Next Wednesday," p. 1.

²⁷ Pauline Noel, interview by author, 9 June 2010, Trumann, Arkansas.

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western.”²⁸ The Maxie Theatre was open seven days a week and even had specials like ten cent shows on Tuesday nights, bingo night, and a two for one show.²⁹

The Maxie Theatre looks almost the same as it did when it opened in 1947. The front façade retains its original Art Deco-style decoration and marquee. Although the lower portion of the front façade has been refinished with a fieldstone veneer, it retains its original double door openings, ticket window, and two of the original four poster display cases. The theatre lobby is one open room with a snack bar on the northwest side of the room. The original candy counter remains part of the snack bar, and a small casement window remains in the back of the snack bar where African-American patrons would order refreshments before integration. From the lobby, there are doors going to an office for theatre personnel, the former African-American entrance and ticket counter, two doors entering the auditorium, ladies’ and men’s restrooms, and the balcony. The theatre lobby currently houses portable shelves of VHS videos, which remain from the Noels video rental business. In 1985 they added the video rental business to provide additional income, but have since stopped renting movies. Decorative metal and glass signs remain in the lobby above the restroom and balcony entrances, reading “Ladies,” “Men,” and “Balcony.”

The auditorium is accessed by two doors in the lobby. A small partition is located just inside the auditorium to block light coming from the lobby, and patrons walk around this wall as they enter the auditorium. The balcony, which is situated above the lobby, is still open (but is no longer used for seating). Two narrow aisles extend the length of the auditorium toward the screen. The auditorium retains its original upholstered seats (both downstairs and in the balcony) and Art Deco-style light fixtures. The light fixtures are made from four semi-circular pieces of metal arranged vertically from large to small with a projecting floral design at the bottom. The interior walls of the theatre feature two large murals painted between 1947 and 1957 by a transient artist who came through Trumann looking for work. The murals depict island scenes with mountains, palm trees, the ocean, and sailboats. A new stage and screen were installed in the 1970s, but the original stage and screen track remain behind the newer screen. Most of the original projection equipment is still used to show movies at the Maxie, with the exception of the lighting equipment. An air refrigeration unit replaced the original air washer air conditioning system sometime prior to 1957 and is still used to cool the theatre.³⁰

The Maxie Theatre continues to show movies on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Because the balcony seating is no longer open to the public, the theatre can accommodate 360 people. Generations of Trumann

²⁸ Ruth Ann Estes, “Noel’s Passion for Film Continues at Maxie,” *Poinsett County Democrat Tribune* 22 August 2007, p. 1 & 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Jack and Pauline Noel, interview by author, 9 June 2010, Trumann, Arkansas.

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residents grew up watching movies at the Maxie Theatre and owners Jack and Pauline Noel hope to keep the theatre open for generations to come.³¹

The Maxie Theatre is one of the oldest continuously operating businesses in Trumann and the only movie theatre.³² The old Grand Theatre burned at least forty years ago.³³ The Maxie Theatre is a rare example of a single-screen movie theatre in northeast Arkansas, and it is still showing movies. It is also an excellent example of the Art Deco style of architecture in Trumann.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Truman, located in northern Poinsett County, developed as a result of the Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company (PL&M). PL&M established a manufacturing plant and veneer mill in Trumann in 1911. The company quickly established itself as the center of daily life in Trumann. Over half of the population of Trumann worked for the company at the mill and in the woods. The company whistle ordered daily activities and the company provided the town's electricity, water, school, and fire service. Poinsett Lumber and Manufacturing Company employees sat on the city government. PL&M was Trumann and the people of Trumann often referred to the company as "Ma Singer," after its parent company, Singer Manufacturing Company.

The Maxie Theatre opened in Trumann on August 20, 1947, and was one of the most modern, state-of-the-art theatres in northeast Arkansas. It boasted upholstered seats, carpeted aisles, an air washer air conditioning system, a Super Simplex Projector, Four Star Sound System, indoor restrooms and water fountains, and germicidal lights to prevent the spread of cold and flu germs. Amenities like these were essential to securing the patronage of local residents because there were competing theatres in nearby towns, including Shady Grove, Promised Land, Lunsford, Harrisburg, Marked Tree, and Lepanto, not to mention the Grand Theatre in Trumann. In keeping with the owners' desire to use the most cutting-edge equipment, the theatre building was designed in the Art Deco style of architecture, which represented a break from traditional styles and an emphasis on modernism and the design of the future. The Maxie Theatre represents a unique example of a single-screen movie theatre in northeast Arkansas and continues to show movies three days a week. It is an excellent example of the Art Deco style of architecture in Trumann as well. The Maxie Theatre is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C** with **local significance** for its Art Deco design.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Ruth Ann Estes, "Maxie Theatre Celebrates 60th Anniversary," p. 1; Jack and Pauline Noel, interview by author.

³³ A fine arts building was constructed on the former site of the Grand Theatre and has taken its name, but the current building is not historic.

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Maxie Theatre
Name of Property

Poinsett County, Arkansas
County and State

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From the southeast corner of West Carlson Street and Arkansas Highway 463, proceed 350 feet southeast along the east side of AR 463 to the point of beginning. From the point of beginning, proceed 175 feet northeast perpendicular to AR 463. Then proceed 110 feet southeast parallel to AR 463. From this point, proceed 175 feet southwest perpendicular to AR 463. Finally, proceed 110 feet northwest along the east side of AR 463 to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the parcel historically associated with the Maxie Theatre.

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 Documentation



Photo of the Maxie Theatre from the 1949 Trumann High School Yearbook.

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Maxie Theatre auditorium, facing the screen.

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Maxie Theatre auditorium, facing the balcony.

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Detail photo of upholstered seats.

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Detail photo of Art Deco-style light fixture inside the theatre auditorium.













Maxie Theatre
 Trumann,
 Pinsett County,
 Arkansas
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