

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

 NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
 INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

 SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
 TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS
**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

The KiMo Theater

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

421 Central Avenue

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Albuquerque

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

#1

STATE

New Mexico

CODE

35

\_\_ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Bernalillo

CODE

001

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mr. Carlo Bachechi

STREET &amp; NUMBER

1711 Dietz Place N.W.

CITY, TOWN

Albuquerque

STATE

New Mexico

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Bernalillo County Clerk's Office

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Albuquerque

STATE

New Mexico

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties

DATE

July 30, 1976

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

State Planning Office 505 Don Gaspar

CITY, TOWN

Santa Fe

STATE

New Mexico 87503

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The KiMo Theater, located on the northeast corner of Central Avenue and Fifth Street in the heart of downtown Albuquerque, is a steel frame and brick structure, three stories high with a fly loft five stories high. The exterior is finished with strongly textured light brown stucco with ornamental details of glazed terra cotta tile and relief work in vivid colors. Built in 1926-27 for both motion picture and stage productions, the auditorium has a proscenium stage and a seating capacity of 1300.

The south elevation, fronting on Central Avenue, is 75' wide with an overall height of 44'6". It has three levels, an entrance foyer flanked by retail space on either side and offices on levels two and three. A large marquee, added in the 1950's, now spans the width of the building replacing the original iron one which covered only the central entrance foyer and box office. It has not yet been determined whether or not the original tile work and wooden grills lie behind the present marquee. Originally a large vertical electric sign with name "KiMo" projected out from the building above the marquee, but this was removed in 1972. With the exception of window frame replacements, the rest of the south elevation frontispiece at levels two and three is intact with all its original tile work and relief ornament in place.

The west elevation, facing Fifth Street, is 142' long, 44'6" at the south end, stepping down to 40' and finally to 23' at the north end. Overall condition of this facade is excellent; the original tile work and ornament are intact. The only alteration has been to the retail shop facade at the southwest corner where originally the two recessed bays were windowed, with tile above and below. The windows were removed, filled in, plastered over and new incongruent tile was added. Facing onto a service alley the north elevation is 75' wide including a fly loft tower which is 60' high. The surface of this facade is exposed red brick, with large double stage doors, an emergency exit and access to the mechanical system. The bowstring roof over the auditorium is 46' high.

The entrance to the theater is through a vestibule which was remodeled in the 1950's. The original Indian symbols painted on the ceiling and vigas (beams) and the ornamental details of the corbels were removed at that time. The original murals have been overpainted with others. The lighting fixture which represented the so-called "Farewell Canoe" were also lost. The "Canoe" was supposed to have carried a dead warrior and was towed by an eagle. Perimeter cove lighting has been added to the walls two feet below the ceiling.

The adjoining lobby is two floors high and is overlooked by an open mezzanine with stairways on either side. Large quadratura murals adorn the upper walls of the lobby, visible from the mezzanine. The murals, which depict the legendary "Seven Cities of Cibola," the cities of gold for which the first Spanish Conquistadores were searching, were painted by German-born artist Carl von Hassler, who died in 1969. Wrought iron railings on the stairs and mezzanine repeat the outline of a bird, an Indian symbol believed to signify Freedom. The railings were designed by Robert E. Powers of New York and fabricated by Gilbert Electric Company of Albuquerque, who also manufactured other hardware in the building. Carpeting in the vestibule,

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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the lobby, on the stairs and the mezzanine covers the original ceramic tile which was produced by the Denver Mantle and Tile Company. The large vigas in the lobby are detailed with vividly painted symbolic Indian designs. Between the vigas are oval zig-zag patterned lancunars from which chandeliers are hung. There are five square support columns detailed with plaster of Paris ornamentation topped by longhorn skull sconces.

The auditorium is almost square, 72' wide by 75' long, with seating for 850 in the orchestra and 450 in the balcony. Orchestra seating is arranged in three sections bordered by aisles. The balcony, divided by a large cross aisle, has an upper section of seven rows and a lower section of five rows. The auditorium ceiling is spanned by large vigas crossed by smaller ones. Alternate sections between the smaller vigas are coffered with the zig-zag Indian lightning symbol. Painted on the vigas are buffalo Yei figures of Navajo mythology - the sun, bird, swastika and lightning. The underside of the balcony has decorated vigas and between them are round zig-zag patterned lancunars similar to those in the lobby. The principal lighting fixtures which also represented the so-called "Farewell Canoe" were destroyed by fire in the late forties. The side walls are decorated with ornamental plaster of Paris bucranium reliefs, with longhorn skull sconces. An almost classical bucrane frieze with longhorn skulls and Indian symbols bordered the proscenium arch. The proscenium and the splay walls with wood grills which concealed the organ, were damaged by fire in 1962, and finally removed to accommodate a larger movie screen.

The symbol language of the Indian people is depicted in form as well as in the vivid color of the ornamental detail. The sun, bird and swastika, repeated throughout the theater, are symbols meaning happiness, freedom and good luck. Colors have symbolic significance varying with use. To symbolize direction, white is usually east, blue is south, yellow is west, and black is north. Blue is also the zenith and black and white spots the nadir. These designations differ on occasion. Usually the face of the sun is blue; that of the moon white. Abstract symbolism is also implied in certain colors, such as blue for peace and happiness, white for day, hope and beginning.

The orchestra pit at the front of the auditorium has been covered. A room beneath the stage contains mechanical equipment and provides access to the orchestra pit. By removing the proscenium, both stage wings were eliminated, and modifying the splay walls reduced the dressing room space. The fly loft has been closed with a dropped ceiling. The projection booth is located at the rear of the balcony and a door connects it to the third floor offices. A doorway links the mezzanine with the second floor offices. The second and third floor offices, some of which are occupied, comprise 3,596 square feet and are accessible from a Central Avenue entrance. The entire building contains approximately 22,534 gross square feet and in spite of numerous fires and other mishaps the theater is in good condition.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Constructed 1926-27 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Robert E. McKee/Boller Brothe

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The movie palace represents a notable American architectural phenomenon, "some of the richest and most extravagantly romantic architecture this country has ever produced," in the words of Ada Louise Huxtable, architectural critic for the New York Times. The KiMo Theater, built in 1926-27 is a notable regional example of theater architecture which embodies architectural traditions of New Mexico and the art and culture of the American Indian of the Southwest.

At the turn of the century there was not one building devoted to cinematographic use in the country. By the 1920's movie madness was sweeping the world and the design of movie theaters became a unique specialty. Two schools of thought developed in theater design. The "atmospheric" school advocated the creation of a completely artificial environment, in the words of George Rapp, "a shrine to democracy where there are no privileged patrons. The "hard top" school used neo-classical forms. The design of the KiMo does not adhere strictly to either concept and the result is a romanticized regional style of architecture. In 1925 Oreste Bachechi, a prominent and successful member of the Italian community in Albuquerque and owner of the Pastime Theater, made plans to build a new movie palace. Bachechi went to Hollywood to find an architect for the new theater which he planned to build at the corner of Fifth and Central. He met Carl Boller, senior partner of Boller Brothers, AIA, whose brother Robert maintained an office in Kansas City. The firm had designed several theaters and they were considered "Theatrical Architects." When Boller first came to Albuquerque to inspect the site he thought the location was too far out of town, but with subsequent trips his enthusiasm for the project grew. He travelled all over New Mexico visiting Indian pueblos and reservations, and gathering a wealth of design material. Pablo Abeita, well-known governor of the Pueblo of Isleta, and founder of the All-Pueblo Indian Council, suggested the name for the theater to Boller: KiMo, meaning "king of its kind."

After months of research Boller showed Bachechi a watercolor rendering of the interior concept proposed for the KiMo. This rendering is included in Ben M. Hall's The Remaining Seats. Longhorn skulls bordered the proscenium and were used elsewhere as light fixtures. Indian blankets took the place of the usual tapestries. The sun, bird and swastika, symbols meaning Life, Freedom and Happiness, were repeated throughout the theater. The Indian motifs and ceremonial masks used so extensively were painted in symbolic colors of the Southwest. The design was certainly appropriate for the local

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#8 Oreste Bachechi was very pleased with Boller's concept for the theater and the details of the building were then worked out. Boller contracted with George Williamson of Albuquerque to oversee construction as associate architect. The firm of Robert E. McKee was hired for the construction. In a little over a year, at a cost of \$150,000, including \$18,000 for the elaborate organ, the KiMo was completed.

The theater opened on September 19, 1927. Two thousand people jammed the theater. Albuquerque Mayor Clyde Tingley, who later became governor of New Mexico, U.S. Senator Sam G. Bratton, former Governor Arthur T. Hannett and Indian leaders from Tesuque, Cochiti and Isleta Pueblos and the Navajo Reservation attended the opening. The program featured sixty Indian dancer Indian singers and a film, Patsy Ruth Miller and Glen Tyron in "Painting the Town."

The same year the KiMo opened, Warner Brothers introduced the "talkies." Acoustically, the theater presented no major problems and, with relatively few changes, the theater enjoyed a long and prosperous life. With the decline of downtown Albuquerque and changes in theater operations and audiences, the KiMo, like theaters all over the country, could no longer be operated profitably. It closed in 1968 but was later reopened once for a season of musical theater productions and again for a rock music concert in 1972.

The City of Albuquerque is now considering the purchase of the KiMo for restoration as a theater and as the nucleus of a center for the performing arts. It is a fine example of regional theater architecture which incorporates New Mexico's architectural and cultural heritage in its rich and elaborate ornamentation.

#9 Hall, Ben M., ed. The Best Remaining Seats. New York, 1961.  
Interviews with Victor Bachechi, November-December, 1973.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Albuquerque Journal, September 19, 1927.  
 Bohme, T.G. "A History of the Italian American in New Mexico," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1958.  
 Dunn, Dorothy. American Indian Painting of the Southwest and Plains Areas. Albuquerque, 1968.  
 (See Continuation Sheet Page 2)

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approx. 1/4 acre.

UTM REFERENCES

A 13 | 349400 | 3883520  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B [ ] | [ ] | [ ]  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

**LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES**

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE Sylvia Cook Architectural Historian, New Mexico State Planning Of  
William G. Osofsky Albuquerque Historic Landmarks Survey

ORGANIZATION

New Mexico State Records Center and Archives DATE November 22, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

404 Montezuma TELEPHONE 505-827-2321

CITY OR TOWN

Santa Fe STATE New Mexico

**12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Thomas W. Merlan*

TITLE

*State Historic Preservation Officer*

DATE

11-24-76

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER.

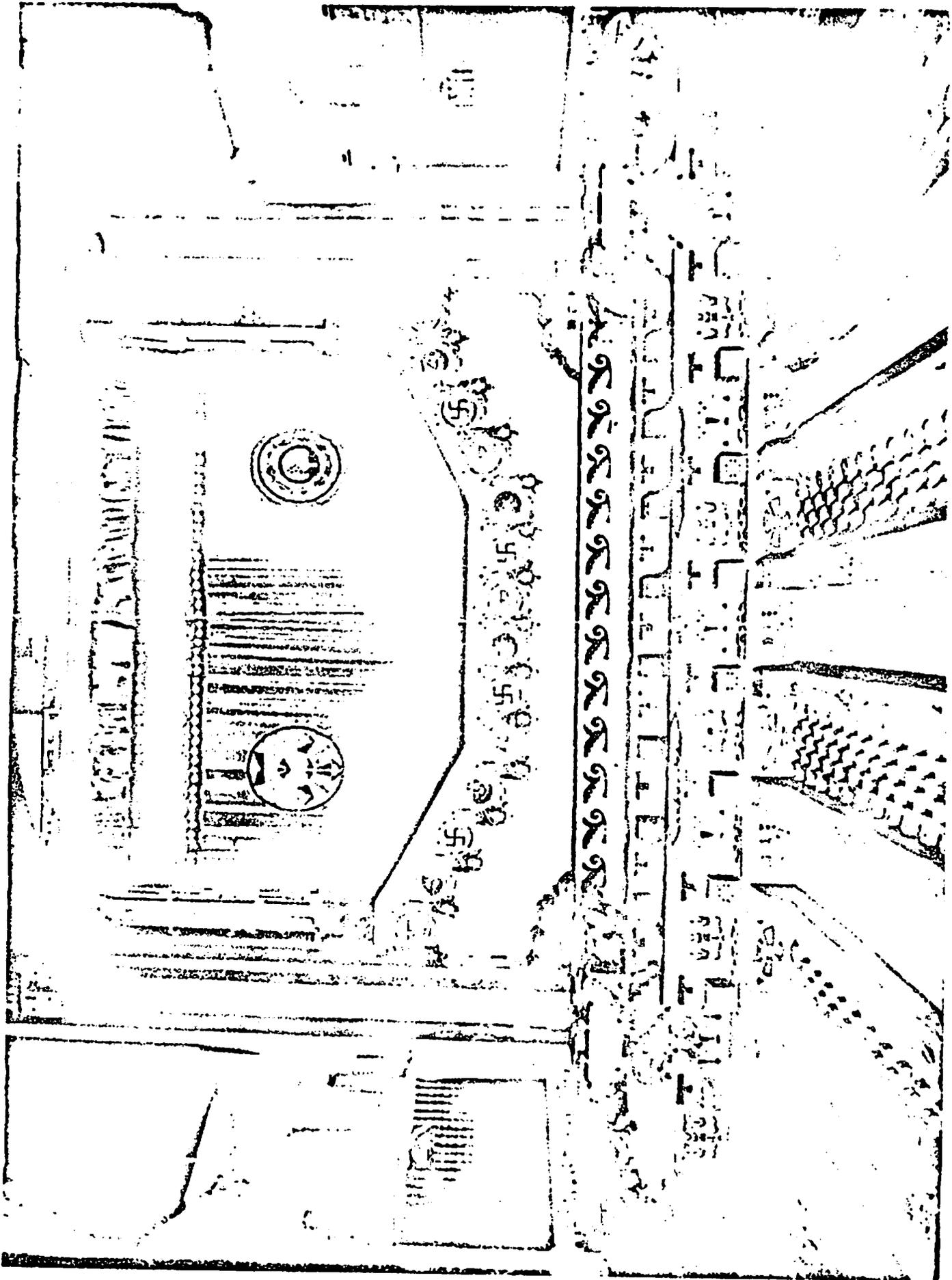
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

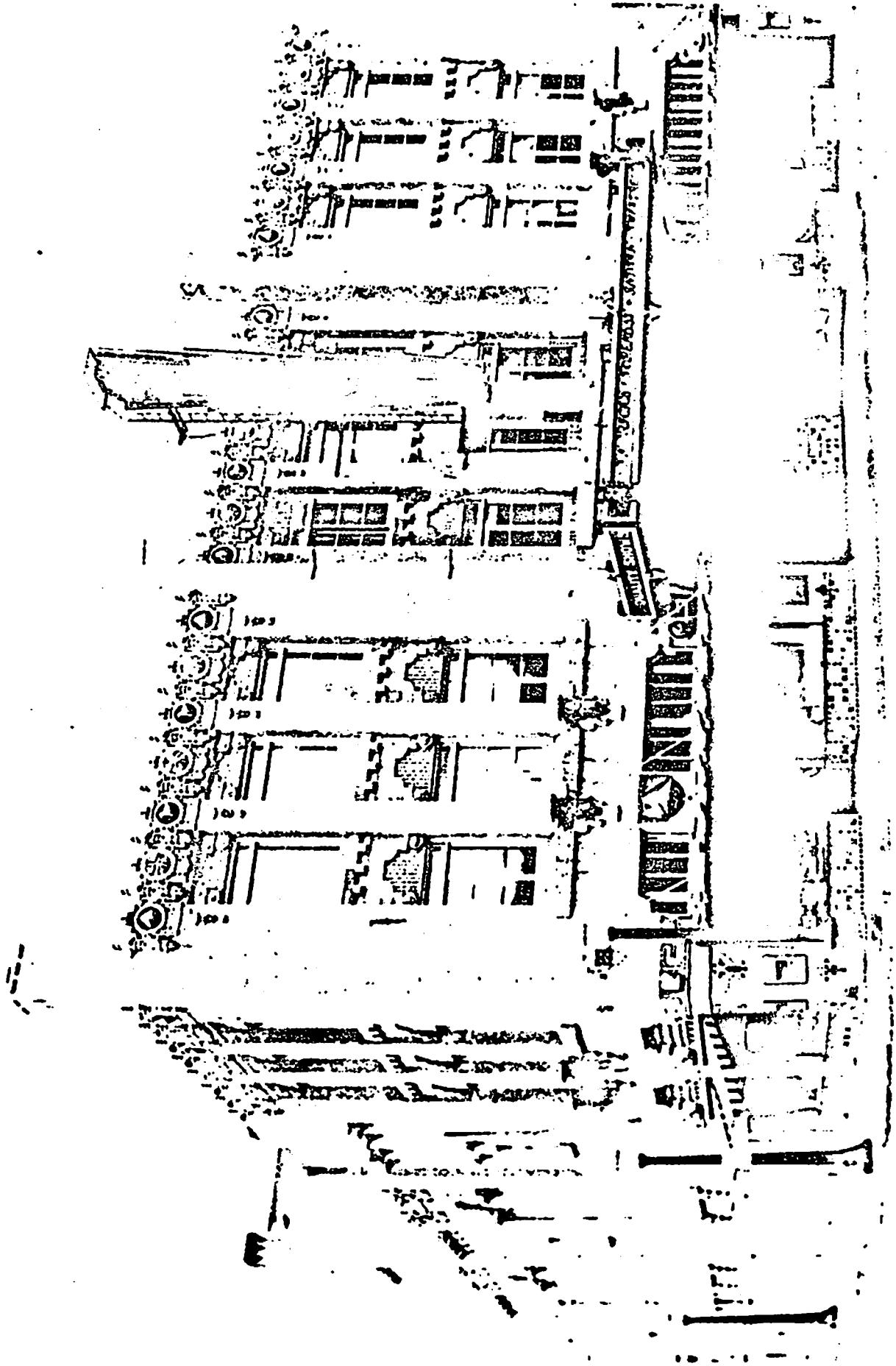
DATE

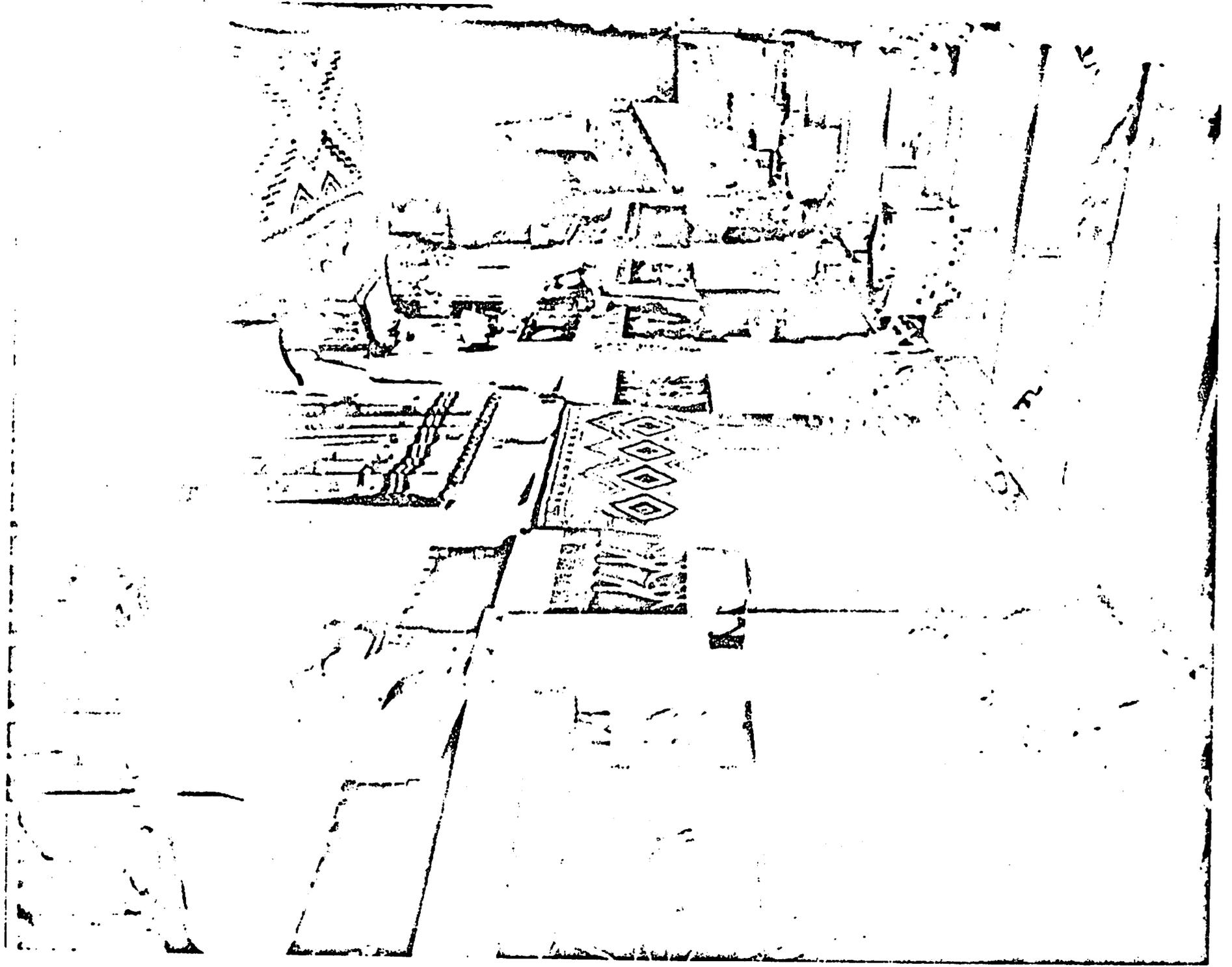
ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

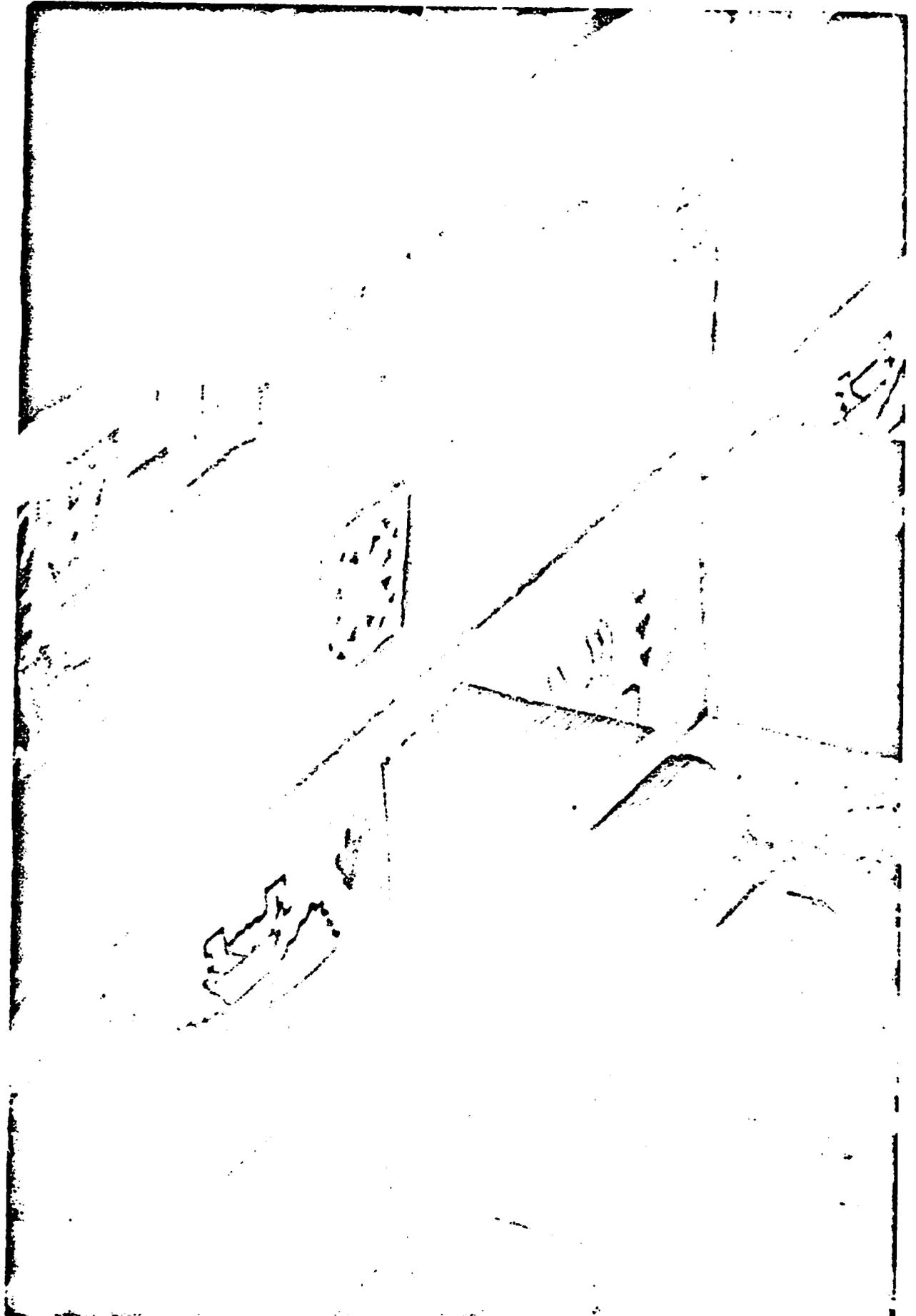


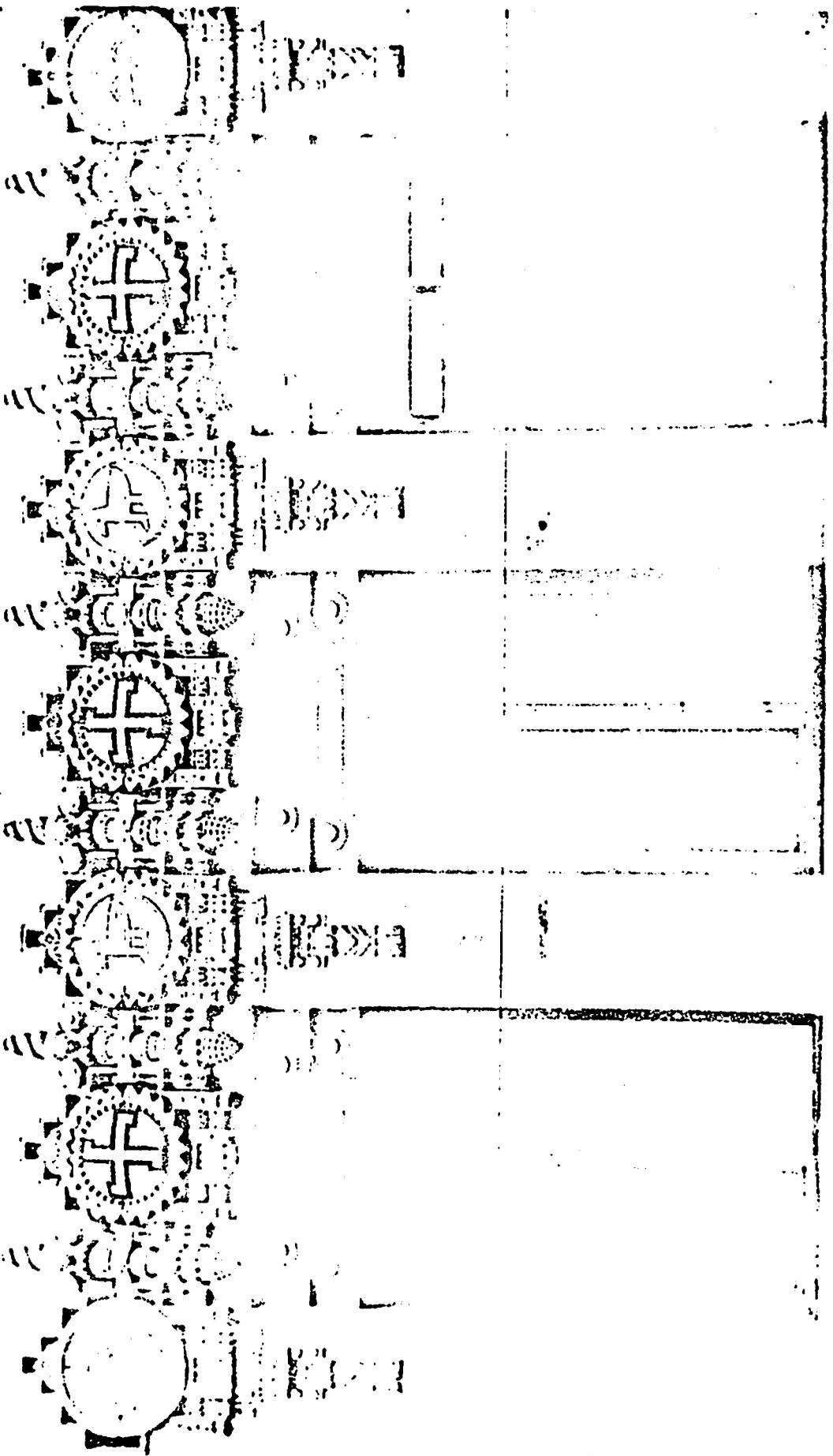




KiMo Theater  
Albuquerque, N. M.  
William G. Osofsky Nov. 1, 1976  
N. M. State Planning Office.

Santa Fe, N. M.  
View of south and west facades  
looking northeast.  
Photo. #4.







## INTRODUCTION

- 1** Las Mananitas
- 2** AT&SF Locomotive 2926
- 3** Anson Flats
- 4** Skinner Building
- 5** KiMo Theatre
- 6** Rosenwald Building
- 7** Occidental Life Insurance Building
- 8** La Posada de Albuquerque
- 9** Sunshine Building
- 10** AT&SF Railway Passenger Depot (site)
- 11** Highland/Hudson Hotel Building
- 12** Old Albuquerque High School
- 13** Old Main Library
- 14** The Whittlesey House
- 15** AT&SF Railway Fire Station
- 16** Roosevelt Park
- 17** Heights Community Center
- 18** Old Airport Terminal

*The Landmarks are presented in order as they appear, north to south and west to east, on the map in the center of the book and are keyed to the map by number.*

**T**his booklet describes Albuquerque's City Landmarks — properties which have been recognized for their special historic, architectural or educational value to the community.

Although the history of a city — its spirit and achievements — can be read in its buildings and neighborhoods, Albuquerque has only slowly recognized the full range of its history. In the late 1950s the city placed a historic zone in Old Town to help preserve the venerable San Felipe de Neri Church and the adobe homes and stores of the old Spanish villa where Albuquerque began. It took the 1970 demolition of the Santa Fe Railway's Alvarado Hotel, arguably the community's most beloved building, to create local awareness of the value of historic structures elsewhere in the city.

A citywide survey of historic structures was begun and in 1978 the City adopted the Landmarks and Urban Conservation Ordinance, which established the Landmarks and Urban Conservation

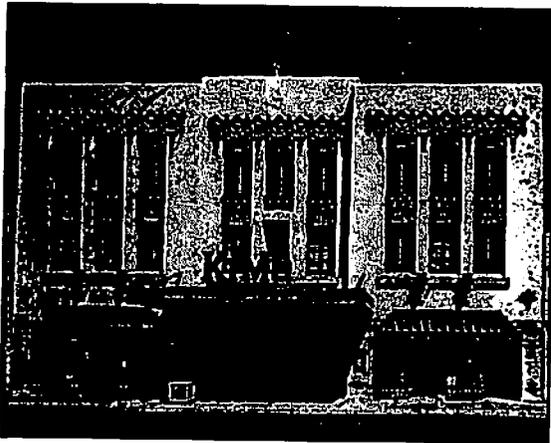
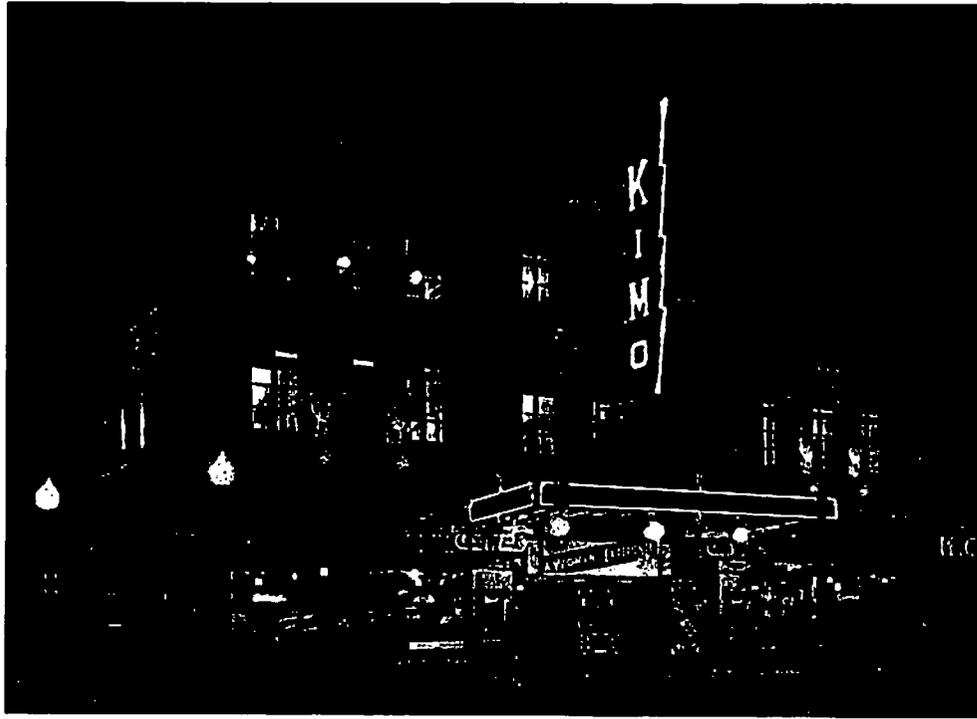
Commission. The Commission is seven citizens appointed by the Mayor and charged with preserving and promoting "the use of structures and areas of historical, cultural, architectural, engineering, archeological or geographic significance located in the City of Albuquerque...." Commission members evaluate individual properties and areas and then make recommendations for historic designation to the City Council. Following approval of a designation, the Commission administers design standards established for each approved structure or historic zone.

Sixteen buildings, a locomotive and a park have been designated as Landmarks. Three neighborhoods have been designated as Historic Overlay Zones, in addition to the Old Town Historic Zone. A separate booklet is available describing the Historic Zones. These areas and individual properties are valuable community assets; they provide insights into the aspirations, the needs and the hopes of Albuquerque as it grew to be the regional center of the state.

We urge you to visit these properties and areas to learn more about our city. A few of the Landmarks can only be viewed from the street. Some are vacant and closed to the public; others are private offices and permission should be obtained before viewing the interior.

# KIMO THEATRE

423 Central NW  
1927  
Carl Boller



The Kimo Theatre opened in 1927, fulfilling Albuquerque merchants Orreste and Maria Bachechi's dream of providing an opulent movie palace based on southwestern design themes. The Pueblo Deco showcase was designed by Carl Boller of Boller Brothers, a Kansas City architectural firm active in movie-house design throughout the west

during Hollywood's early days of popularity. A luncheonette and gift shop were located in spaces adjacent to the theatre entry.

The Kimo borrowed motifs from many of the pueblos surrounding Albuquerque, as well as from Navajo imagery and western folklore. Ceiling beams, light fixtures, handrails and other building elements were decorated to reflect the popular attractions of New Mexico's native peoples and natural wonders. Well-known local artist Carl von Hassler created murals for the lobby area, depicting the mythical Seven Cities of Cibola.

The Kimo was purchased by the City of Albuquerque in 1977 for use as a community arts center. Following plans by architects Harvey Hoshour and Dan Pearson, the theatre's exotic details are being carefully restored and updated to serve a new generation of New Mexicans.

Isleta pueblo Governor Pablo Abeita won \$500

for suggesting the name, which means "king of its kind." Construction cost \$150,000, with an addi-

