

Marianne Theater
Name of Property

Campbell County, Kentucky
County and State

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	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
0	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)

Art Deco - Moderne

Materials (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick, Concrete Block, Glazed Block, Tile

roof: Asphalt /metal

other: Aluminum, Tin, Glass Block

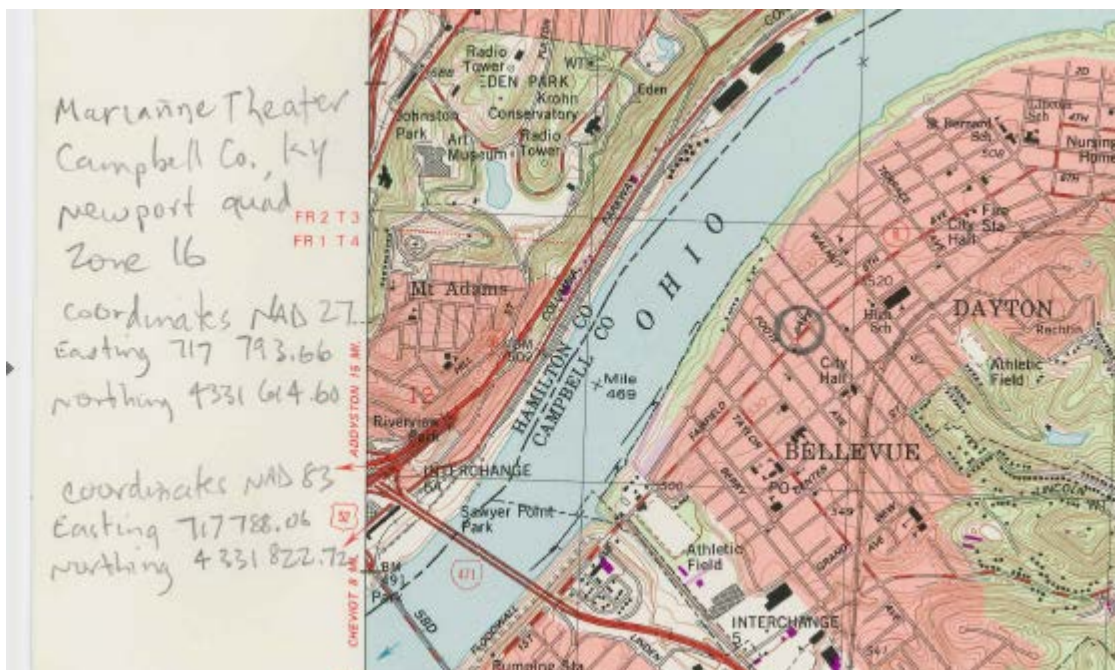
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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Designed by Registered Architect Paul B. Kiel in 1941 and built in 1942 by owner-manager Peter L. Smith, the Marianne Theater (CP-B-6) sits in the center of the 600 block of Fairfield Avenue in Bellevue, Kentucky. Bellevue is a town along the Ohio River in northern Kentucky, across from Cincinnati, Ohio, and sandwiched between two Kentucky towns—Newport on Bellevue's west side and Dayton on the east side. The theater faces Fairfield Avenue, Bellevue's primary commercial street, which becomes State Route 8, a major travel route in Northern Kentucky linking river towns, and running parallel to the Ohio River shore, often no more than a block away from the River. This property was listed as a contributing element of the Fairfield Avenue Historic District (1988, NRIS 88000100). This form does not nominate any new area to the National Register, but gives fuller consideration to the property than it received in the district nomination.



The Lot

The historic part of Bellevue sits on rather level land. Much of that area is on the National Register within the Taylor's Daughters Historic District (1988, NRIS 88000101), a residential district that overlays about 75% of the historic town area. The Marianne Theater stands across the street from the district's northern edge.

The lot is slightly irregular, but basically rectangular, measuring approximately 61.92' x 135'. Bellevue's street plan is on a grid, though not oriented to cardinal directions. The long dimension of the lot runs from front to back, in a northwest-southeast direction; the short dimension stretches southwest-northeast from side to side. The building comprises almost the entire lot. The building extends all the way back to Gorman Alley at its rear. Two walkways are on either side of the building, each approximately 5-feet wide.

Exterior Description

The Marianne Theater's design draws upon motifs from Art Deco and Moderne styles. Art Deco appears on buildings starting in the 1920s, and employs symmetrical facades, bold colors, geometric shapes, and machine age materials including aluminum, neon light, glass block and radical tile patterns. The Moderne style

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emphasized horizontality and employs rounded edges, often implying movement and celebrating technological achievement. Both styles not only embraced but reveled in the ideas of luxury and exuberance.

The Marianne Theater makes use of symmetrical design, glazed and colored tile, contrasts between horizontal and vertical elements, and geometrical shapes. The front façade is divided into 3 bays—a prominent entry bay flanked by a wing on each side. The building is covered in earth tone glazed block and tiles in a variegated pattern. The building's most dominant feature is the cobalt blue panel in the central bay's second story. It gives the building a vertical emphasis, with framing half-round cream-colored pillars topped by orange drum caps, as well as a central orange-and-cream pilaster. The cobalt panels are porcelain and measure 24"x 24". The cap and colored trim accents on the pillars and central pilaster are also porcelain.



Exterior of theater



Marquee



Entry

The second-floor bay draws further attention with its concave massing, contrasting with the triangular projection of the marquee. The marquee proclaims the theater's name "Marianne" in stylized deco lettering. The marquee features an east- and west-facing information panel framed in cobalt blue with neon accents that are inspired from the three porcelain accent stripes atop the façade. A matching "M" accent shines at the front point of the marquee. Finally, the underside of the marquee has bright yellow lights in a radiating pattern that chase from the edge of the building out to the edge of the marquee.

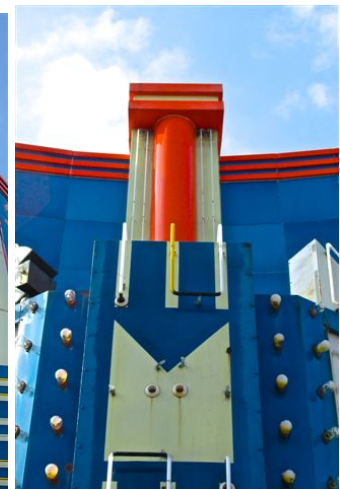
The strong vertical emphasis of the second floor is carried in the flanking bays by the tall glass block windows, three blocks wide and ten blocks tall, to the right and left of the marquee. The glass block features appear to have neon light accents inside.



Marquee



2nd floor window



Marquee

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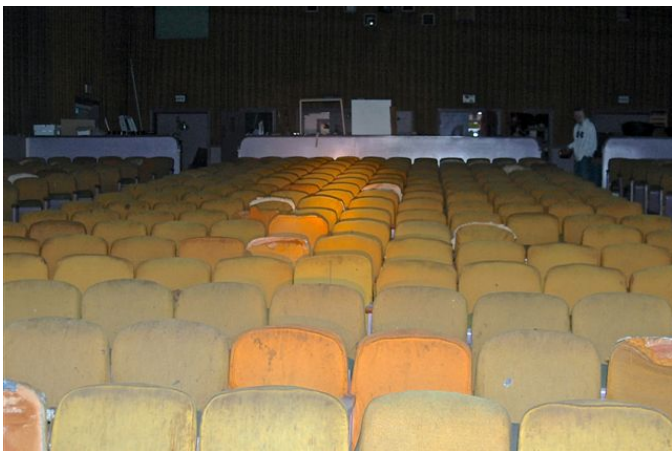
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More muted Deco and Moderne elements come together on the first floor. The exterior ticket booth protrudes from the central bay with a curved glass window, and high-gloss black subway tile with orange and teal accents; the ticket booth is centered under the marquee. These features serve as the foundation for the central pilaster accent above the marquee. On the left and right of the double-door entry ways, black 4" x 4" subway tiles alternate with narrower orange and teal tiles in a feather design. The doors are blonde wood, possibly blonde walnut, which was extremely popular in 1940s deco design, and feature half-moon windows. The header across the entire entrance incorporates a scalloped tile in a whimsical zig-zag pattern while incorporating cream, teal, and orange. Dual shadowbox frames are found to the left and right of the entry doors. One of these sits below each of the second floor's glass block windows for the "now showing" movies. The smaller shadowbox, closer to the doors, sit below the marquee, and advertised coming attractions. Access to the sidewalk on the east side of the building is gained through a wrought iron gate in a one-story false front extension to the building—the only non-symmetrical part of the front façade.

The side and back elevations are completely utilitarian. Four brick pilasters rise from the ground to the roof on either side. A number of openings are found on the first floor of either side, placed more for function than for artistic effect. On both the east and west facing walls there are second story windows close to the front of the building. The windows are 6 light with transom casement windows (2x3 pattern). The building is topped by a slightly curved metal and tar paper roof. The back elevation rises to a stepped parapet.

Interior Description

Based on the original architects drawings from 1941, movie goers entered into a small lobby and concession area. The lobby had an oval tray ceiling with neon light feature and double doors into the theater on both the left and right.



Interior views of seating area

Passing through the lobby doors, patrons entered the theater foyer, a 21' x 48' area at the back of the theater, with access to the men's and ladies restrooms, telephone booth, and water fountain. Each restroom also had a small lounge area. A staircase at the back left of the foyer led upstairs to the "crying room". The upstairs area was also home to a maintenance room, the projection room—complete with private bathroom and mechanics room—and the theater office.

A small "pony wall" 4 feet high separated the foyer from the seating area. Original drawings show seating layout in three sections, left/center/right, with 4-foot-wide aisles separating them. The center aisle consisted of

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23 rows of 12 seats. The side aisles consisted on 21 rows of 6 chairs and then tapered with a row of 5 and a row of 4 for a total capacity of 540 seats.

The viewing area remains as one large room with a sloped floor and a roughly 30' ceiling. The pony wall, with isle entries remains, as does the foyer area. While the original phone booth still exists (now used as a storage closet) the water fountain has been removed. There is no balcony present nor was there evidence of a balcony being added for additional seating. The seating past the pony wall remains in three sections, left/center/right/. Markings in the concrete floor reveal that 10 rows of seating had been removed to allow for more space near the theater screen. The original drawing shows a void of approximately 17' between the original front row and the screen, thus, these additional rows, now removed were not original to the theater and were added on to increase seating capacity at one time. Finally, a roughly 4-foot-high stage extends from the screen. There is an additional five to six feet of space behind the screen at the same level as the stage. This stage area is shown in the original drawings.

The building's interior repeats its exterior symmetry. The restrooms and lounges are still in their original layout and the crying room with the original speaker box remains, though the marble sill below the viewing window has been replaced.

Much of the technology of the theater still exists, including some of the original sound system. Behind the screen is a large "Voice of the Theater" speaker system and the projection room still houses two 35mm film projectors. Though not original, these projectors appear to be upgrades done in the 1970s to keep pace with advancements in technology.

Changes to the Building since the Period of Significance

The building remains remarkably intact from its time of construction. The interior has had minor modifications from the original layout and seating was replaced and changed a number of times since the theater opened in 1942. The last interior renovation on record was by Grand Theaters in 1988, where the newspaper announced a new capacity of 384 (*Kentucky Post*, Nov. 6, 1989). Minor renovations and repair to the marquee, mostly to the neon lights, also took place in 1988. While original drawings and the current layout of the theater shows seating capacity of 540, it remains unclear if additional seating was ever added.

Today, the interior of the Marianne Theater is deteriorating though the layout of the space remains a one-screen movie theater. The entrance still has the original small lobby with concession area, though it has been modified to add room for additional concessions by blocking one of the entry doors to the viewing room. The lobby/concession area has non-original wall coverings but does retain the original tray ceiling with lighted accents.

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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.)

Property is:

- ☐ 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

Period of Significance

1942

Significant Dates

1942

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Kiel, Paul B. (architect)

Period of Significance:

The Period of Significance is a single year, 1942, the year of construction, in keeping with National Register conventions for the Period of Significance for architecturally significant properties.

Criteria Considerations: **NA**

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Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Marianne Theater (CP-B-6) meets the first term of Criterion C: it is a type of construction—a neighborhood movie theater. It sits in the center of the 600 block of Fairfield Avenue, considered the Main Street in Bellevue, Kentucky, not terribly larger than many of the other small business, shops, restaurants and coffee shops that line Fairfield Avenue. The significance of the Marianne Theater is considered within the context “Neighborhood Theaters in Northern Kentucky, 1929-1965.” Until the 1950s, when movies began to be shown in drive-ins, and in the 1960s, when they began to appear in suburban shopping areas, movie houses were a downtown phenomenon. The grand, architecturally significant movie palaces were found in large cities; these were designed to rival the downtown’s other site of fantasy and desire, the department store. In the same way that a city’s most opulent department store would have numerous smaller and more prosaic versions of that iconic store, numerous downscale versions of the grand movie palace were built to satisfy the great consumer hunger for movies. These are being called “neighborhood theaters” in this nomination. The Marianne Theater is a good example of this large group of resources. As a group, these neighborhood movie houses were important until eclipsed by the rising popularity of television and the suburban Cineplex. In the comparison property, the department store, one would never be confused whether he or she was in the iconic property or in the pretender. In the case of the movie-going experience, the difference between the movie palace and the neighborhood theater remained apparent only until the lights went dark, and the main feature began flickering on the screen. Insofar as watching a movie is engaging in an imaginative experience, for the time that the film ran, the great distance between the neighborhood theater and the movie palace could vanish. This made the neighborhood theater a significant place in which Americans participated in cultural entertainments and forged their cultural values. The Marianne Theater was listed in the National Register in 1988 as a contributing element of the Fairfield Avenue Historic District (NRIS 88000100).

Historic context: The Neighborhood Theater in Northern Kentucky, 1929-1965

The architecture and style of the neighborhood movie theater in the late-1930s and early- to mid-1940s was directly influenced by the grand inner city movie palaces that arose as early as the 1910s. Scaled down, these neighborhood theaters enticed movie-goers with their colorful and exuberant design but also with the glamour of the brightly lit marquee, which incorporated design elements such as multicolored neon, chase lights and large Art Deco lettering. Marcus Loew, founder of Loew’s Theaters and later MGM Studios, said in a 1928 interview, that he witnessed his first moving picture in northern Kentucky, an experience that became *the* reason he got into the movie business of making movies (Webster: 36).

The moving picture that Marcus Loew saw was by Edwin Porter and titled *The Great Train Robbery*. Two men, I.W. McMahan and G. Henry Hackstadt, opened the first moving picture showplace in 1905 at 521 Madison Avenue in Covington, named the Edisonian Annex (fig. 01). The *Kentucky Post* reports, “A special permit was drawn up as the city of Covington had not license at that time for a movie theater.” The *Kentucky Post* gave that license cost as fifteen dollars (September 28, 1926, pg.7).

According to Robert Webster of the Kenton Country Historical Society and author of *The Balcony is Closed*, “Silent films were popular from around 1905 to the late 1920s, when the first films containing sound, also known as ‘talkies’ were introduced” (Webster: pg. 8). The advent of sound also had a role in helping the neighborhood theater gain popularity in the 1930s. The larger movie palaces would have live entertainment and musical accompaniment that many neighborhood theaters did not have the resources to provide during the silent

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film era. With the advent of motion picture sound, neighborhood theaters could deliver a complete picture and sound experience as well.

As the movie industry evolved, so did its theaters. The 1916-1917 Covington City Directory list 27 Theaters for Covington, Newport, Bellevue and Dayton. In some cases the theaters opened only to close rather quickly while others enjoyed long lives. Theaters changed ownership, which often resulted in the name of the theater changing. “Called the Delbee in the early 1900s, the theater located on Decoursey Avenue operated years later as the Derby Theater [fig. 02]. Covington’s Lyric Theater, located at 732 Madison Avenue in Covington was renamed the L. B. Wilson Theater in honor of one of the investment partners and later was named the Madison Theater which remained in operation until 1977. Wilson was a partner in the Strand Theater, as well as in the Hippodrome Theater, which was later named “the Broadway” (see fig. 03; *Kentucky Post*, December 29, 1986).

Both the Art Deco and Moderne styles were a part of the Modern Movement in architecture. Both these styles alluded to the exotic, the future, and insofar as Deco design was seen in on-screen set pieces and in movie house design, implied glamour. The Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission says Art Deco “first gained public attention in 1922 in a design competition for the Chicago Tribune headquarters” (PHMC, 2104). The Neighborhood Theater used these architectural designs to create a sense of excitement and place through the 1940s.

Buildings with Art Deco style used modern materials as well as modern lines and angles. This design approach can also be seen in post-1925 apartment buildings, coffee shops, drug stores, schools and even government buildings, such as armories and post offices. Art Deco buildings have a sleek linear appearance with stylized, often geometric ornamentation. The primary façade of Art Deco buildings often features a series of set backs that create a stepped outline. Low-relief decorative panels can be found at entrances, around windows, along roof edges or as string courses. “Art Deco buildings feature distinctive smooth finish building materials such as stucco, concrete block, glazed brick or mosaic tile. Decorative details can incorporate various artistic or exotic motifs to suit the building’s function or the architect’s whim. Chevrons, zigzags, and other geometrical motifs are common forms of ornament on Art Deco style buildings” (PHMC, 2104).

The large and lavish movie palaces offered many amenities, such as stage shows prior to the main feature, nursery services, bathroom attendants, ushers and concession stands. By contrast, smaller neighborhood theaters had a full concession stand and ushers, but little else. The Marianne was one of the first neighborhood theaters in Northern Kentucky to offer a “crying room” with a view of the screen for adult patrons to move to if their child became fussy during the movie.

The Marianne thrived in the 1940s and 1950s, as many other neighborhood theaters began to close their doors. The area would see a number of neighborhood theaters go dark, including the Elm Theater in Ludlow, the Four Star Dixie in Ft. Mitchell, Covington’s Family Theater, the Hiland Theater in Fort Thomas, and the Kentucky Theater in Latonia. At this same time, drive-in theaters began to appear and gain popularity, leaving many neighborhoods with no movie house within a walk-able distance. Bellevue’s Marianne Theater was, and remains surrounded by commercial and residential development. This allowed the theater to serve as both a social and entertainment anchor for not only downtown Bellevue but other neighboring communities as well.

The following Table outlines a complete chronology of neighborhood movie theaters in Northern Kentucky from the early 1900’s through the early 1980’s.

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Theaters in Northern Kentucky

Name of Theater	Years of Operation	Location
Covington Theater (Began showing movies after 1910)	1910-	Covington
Odeon Theater (Began showing movies after 1910)	1890's-1912	Covington
Central Garden (Began showing movies after 1906)	1900-1910	Covington
Frank Lanius	1905-1905	Covington
Edisonian Annex	1905-1905	Covington
Olympia Theater	1906-1910	Covington
Grand Family Theater	1907-unknown	Newport
Colonial Theater (twice)	1908-1910 and 1912-1918	Covington
Lyric Theater	1909-1911	Covington
Clifton Gardens	1909-1911	Newport
Star Dome Theater	1909-1912	Covington
Savoy Theater	1909-1912	Covington
Nimo Theater	1909-1913	Newport
Airdome Theater	1909-1915	Covington
Crystal Theater	1910 - 1911	Covington
Palace Theater	1910-1910	Bellevue
Palace Theater	1910-1911	Covington
Fairyland Theater	1910-1911	Covington
Madison Theater Newport	1910-1911	Newport
Pastime Theater	1910-1912	Covington
Star Theater - Formerly Olympia Theater	1910-1912	Covington
Orphium Theater - Formerly Colonial Theater	1910-1912	Covington
DeMilo Airdome Theater	1910-1912	Covington
Grand Theater	1910-1913 and 1915-1930	Latonia
River Breeze Theater	1910-1915	Covington
Yourk Theater	1910-1916	Newport
Holeman Theater	1910-1918	Covington
Casino Theater	1910-1918	Covington
Gayety Theater	1910-1925	Covington
Lyric Theater Newport	1911- unknown	Newport
Kozy Theater	1911-1911	Covington
Kozy Theater Newport	1911-1911	Newport
Pioneer Theater - Formerly Palace Theater	1911-1911	Bellevue
Classic Thater - Formerly Crystal Theater	1911-1914	Covington
Ciarlo Theater	1911-1916	Newport
Lyric (Reopen, different location) - Formerly Kozy Theater	1911-1927	Covington
Temple Theater	1911-1931	Newport

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Bell Theater - Formerly Star Theater	1912-1913	Covington
American Theater - Formerly Palace Theater	1912-1913	Covington
Delight/Elite Theater	1912-1913	Covington
Gayety Theater Latonia	1912-1915	Latonia
Park Theater	1912-1916	Covington
Air-O-Theater	1912-1916	Newport
Hippodrome Theater	1912-1917	Covington
Jewel Theater - Formerly Pioneer Theater	1912-1917	Bellevue
Princess Theater	1912-1920	Bellevue
Alcazar Theater	1912-1920	Bellevue
Colonial Theater	1912-1921	Newport
Delbee Theater	1912-1924	Latonia
Casion Theater Bellevue	1912-1925	Bellevue
West End 5-Cent Airdome	1913-1916	Newport
Alamo Theater	1913-1916	Newport
Royal Theater - Formerly Pastime Theater	1913-1918	Covington
Brighton Airdome	1913-1918	Newport
Tuxedo Garden Music Hall Newport	1914-1914	Newport
Arial Theater	1914-1915	Latonia
Avenel Theater	1914-1920	Bellevue
Myrtle Theater	1914-1920's	Newport
Pike Theater	1915-1918	Covington
Phoenix Theater	1915-1918	Covington
Hippodrome Newport	1915-1930's	Newport
Strand Theater	1915-1930"s	Covington
Lo-Mi-Del Theater - Formerly Delight/Elite Theater	1916-1917	Covington
Royal Theater Newport	1916-1917	Newport
Favorite Theater	1916-1918	Newport
Kentuckian Theater	1917-1925	Covington
Rialto Theater - Formerly Orphium Theater	1918-1920's	Covington
Victoria Theater	1918-1922	Covington
Delmar Theater	1918-1922	Covington
American Theater - Formerly Jewel Theater	1918-1925	Bellevue
Family Theater - Formerly Royal Theater	1918-1950's	Covington
Broadway Theater - Formerly Hippodrome Theater	1918-1950's	Covington
Liberty Theater	1923-1970's	Covington
Walker's Theater	1924-1936	Latonia
Demilo Theater - Formerly DeMilo Airdome	1925-1930"s	Covington
Shirley Theater	1925-1950's	Covington
Derby Theater	1926-1930 and 1933-1939	Latonia
Liberty Theater - Formerly Casino Theater Bellevue	1926-1941	Bellevue

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L.B.Wilson Theater - Formerly Lyric (reopen different location)	1928-1942	Covington
Sylvia Theater	1929-1941	Bellevue
Latonia Theater	1930-1939	Latonia
Hipp Theater	1930's-1959	Newport
Kentucky Theater Latonia	1939-1950's	Latonia
State Theater	1939-1969	Newport
Dayvue Theater - Formerly the Avenel Theater	1941-1952	Bellevue
Madison Theater - Formerly L.B. Wilson Theater	1942-1977	Covington
Marianne Theater Built on the original site of the Alcazar Theater	1942-present	Bellevue
Cinema X	1970-1982	Newport

Robert Webster, Vice President of the Kenton County Historical Society stated, "At one time, there were more than 60 neighborhood movie theaters in Northern Kentucky, and therefore, Covington, Newport, Ludlow, Bellevue, Dayton, and Latonia, had many choices for the early moviegoer. Theaters such as the Madison, Gayety, Liberty, and State, enjoyed long lives here, and the people of this region, over the course of many generations, are quick to remember their popularity" (Webster: 36).

Many Americans went to the movies not only to escape from life's burdens for a brief time, but also to watch the news reels shown before the main feature. The article "Movies & Rural America," states that as late as the early 1950s, Americans were spending a quarter (25.7%) of their recreational/ entertainment dollars at the movies; this, despite the introduction of television (Ganzel; 2007).

In "Television Comes to America, 1947-1957," James L. Baughman writes, "the number of homes with TVs increased from 0.4 percent in 1948 to 55.7 percent in 1954 and to 83.2 percent four years later. No other household technology, not the telephone or indoor plumbing, had ever spread so rapidly into so many homes. And TV had absorbed evenings that had once been spent reading, listening to the radio, or going to the movies" (see figure 04; Baughman: pg. 42). Competition also came from drive-in theaters, which offered added services ranging from playground, miniature golf, pony rides, toy train rides, auto service stations, and even bottle warming areas.

By the 1960s and into the 1970s, the neighborhood theater had truly fallen on hard times. In addition to television and the drive-in theater, the neighborhood cinema also faced challenges as families pushed outward to suburban areas where larger multi screen theaters began to appear. Neighborhood theaters began to close or disappear altogether. Some that did survive demolition were eventually repurposed. Currently, there are no active single-screen movie theaters left in Northern Kentucky.

History of the Marianne Theater

The site of the Marianne Theater was once home to Bellevue's Alcazar Theater. The Alcazar had a very short life, opening in 1910 and closing in June of 1912. The Alcazar was demolished (date unknown) and the Marianne Theater was built on that site thirty years later (Webster, pg. 12).

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The Marianne Theater opened in 1942. Built by Peter L Smith, who also operated the Sylvia Theater (figure 05, survey form CP-B-210) three blocks to the west, the Marianne was considered ultra modern, not just in its design, but also was very smartly laid out in its interior plan and amenities. Seating capacity at the time of the grand opening was said to be 700, though some accounts offer a different number. It also featured a small stage in front of the screen, flanked by red velvet curtains. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Newport City Directories show the manager changes, first to a Mrs. Blanche Smith, and later to Edward G. and Louis J. Smith.

In 1983, the theater was bought by the owner of the Elsmere Village Cinema, Anne Cohen. She operated the theater for a few years before selling it to Grand Theaters of Cincinnati. This was the only time in the life of the theater that it closed for a period of time. Grand Theaters hired Harry Crowder of Dayton Kentucky as the new manager, reopening the Marianne after making repairs to the marquee and concession area. Carpet was replaced and the heating and cooling system was given much needed repairs. Seating was also reconfigured, with the *Kentucky Post* reporting a new capacity of 384 (*Kentucky Post*, Nov. 6, 1989). Despite extensive renovations, the façade of Marianne remained faithful to its original design.

After so much had been done to the Marianne in 1989, the theater suffered a fire in 1992, and has remained closed since. Bellevue Fire Lt. John Henderson reported to the *Kentucky Post*, “plastic bags left inside the popcorn machine overheated and exploded causing the blaze.” (*Kentucky Post*, May 4, 1992) Though the fire was extinguished quickly, the smoke damage was considerable and the theater was closed until the city health inspector approved a reopening. That day never came.

The Marianne recently was purchased by the City of Bellevue from current owner, Jack Eck, for approximately \$138,000. The city recently held town meetings to decide how best to use the space. Councilman Steve Guidugli stated, “What to do about the vacant gem that is the Marianne has long been a topic of conversation in Bellevue. In every candidate forum in the last ten years, I've heard someone ask, 'What are you going to do with the Marianne?' We can now make something happen with that building and move that forward, thanks to Mayor Riehl for having a good rapport with the owner. I think moving forward, it's going to be a real asset for our community and our citizens” (*River City News*, 2014).

Evaluation of Significance of the Marianne Theater within the context “Neighborhood Theater in Northern Kentucky, 1929-1965”

The grand architecturally significant movie palaces of the 1920s and 1930s found in the large cities were being emulated in the form of smaller neighborhood theaters to satisfy the great consumer hunger for movies. The Marianne Theater is a good example of this large group of resources. Located on Fairfield Avenue, Bellevue’s “Main Street”, the Marianne Theater replaced the Sylvia Theater, also owned by Peter Smith, in 1942. Considered Ultra Modern in comparison to other neighboring theaters, The Marianne was a social destination for the residents of Bellevue. The neighborhood theater became a significant place in which Americans participated in cultural entertainments and forged their cultural values.

One of Northern Kentucky’s most successful neighborhood theaters, The Marianne, was the area’s largest and most modern entertainment venue. The Dayvue Theater in neighboring Dayton Kentucky, built just one year earlier, was a close rival. The Dayvue closed in 1952, leaving The Marianne Theater to stand alone as the area’s main entertainment destination.

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From the time The Alcazar Theater first opened in 1910, Bellevue has had a neighborhood movie theater. The Marianne stands today as it did when it first opened in 1942, still nestled between residential and commercial properties in a vibrant walk-able area. Weathering the competition of the drive-in theaters and the popularity of television, the Marianne operated as a single screen movie house continuously from its grand opening in 1942 until 1988. The façade and marquee continue to stir up wonderful memories of first dates, friendships and family traditions. The Marianne is one of a tiny fraction of theaters that still exist in their original form and is a truly significant example of the neighborhood movie theater. The Fairfield Avenue Historic District form acknowledged the architectural style of the building with this statement, true when written in 1988: “The Marianne bears the distinction of being the last unaltered Deco theater in Greater Cincinnati still in operation.” (Warminski, Section 7, page 3). Comparing the 1988 image of the building on the nomination’s Photo 11, with its appearance today, shows a building which has undergone remarkably little change.

Evaluation of the Integrity between the Significance of the Marianne Theater and its physical condition

Currently, there are only a fraction of the neighborhood theaters left, leaving the Marianne among an even smaller number of neighborhood theaters that still retain their original façade, marquee and interior layout. In addition, the Marianne’s interior, although in disrepair, still retains the layout and infrastructure for a single screen movie theater and still has some of the original interior Deco design elements. Some of these other neighborhood theaters have been completely demolished, while others are not recognizable as once having been movie theaters, now serving other purposes such as a printing shop, a church, a music store, a bank and an auto body shop (See figures 06, 07, 08, 09, 10. Figure 11 shows approximate locations of past theaters and the ones still in existence). The Marianne stands today as the last remaining neighborhood theater in Northern Kentucky, according to an article in the Kentucky Post (November 6, 1989 p.4).

The Marianne Theater retains excellent integrity of **location**. The Marianne theater building remains on its original footprint and has never been moved. This location in the 600 block of Fairfield Ave placed the theater in the center of Bellevue’s main street. Many downtown theaters built just after World War II shared this town center location. Such a prominent spot indicates the significance of the theaters in the history of American towns.

The Marianne Theater retains excellent integrity of **setting**. The theater faces Fairfield Avenue, Bellevue’s primary commercial street. The immediate setting shows how the theater served as a vibrant part of Bellevue’s commercial arena. Its closeness to residential neighborhoods shows that it provided a place for great social interaction. Operating at this location consistently from its grand opening in 1942 til it closed its doors in 1992, the theater’s setting ways significant in its place within the history of Bellevue. Its current integrity of setting continues its associations with the entertainment culture of the city as well as the history and culture of post-World War II movie theaters in general.

The Marianne Theater retains excellent integrity of **materials**. While some minor restoration to the exterior of the theater was completed in 1988, the materials remain almost entirely in their original form. The façade remains as it was, built with its original marquee, and retaining many original building materials, with the exceptions of the ticket window glass and front doors. The doors were replaced with some of similar design, blonde wood and half-moon windows. The side and back elevations remain as they were originally—completely utilitarian.

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The Marianne Theater retains excellent integrity of **design**. The Marianne was considered ultra modern not just in design but also in its smartly laid-out interior plan and amenities. The exterior of the theater is still in its original form and is consistent with the 1941 architect's rendering of the facade. Vibrant 24" x 24" cobalt blue porcelain panels with orange porcelain stripes continue to dominate the concave second story set back. Echoing the excitement and energy of the Coney Island Boardwalk or the Wurlitzer Juke box, the colorful neon and active chaser lights were meant to catch the attention of those passing by. The interior of the Marianne Theater is deteriorating though the layout of the space remains a one-screen movie theater. The entrance still has the original small lobby with concession area, though it has been modified to add additional concession and currently blocks one of the entry doors to the viewing room. The lobby/concession area has non-original wall coverings but does retain the original tray ceiling with lighted accent.

The Marianne Theater retains excellent integrity of **workmanship**. With only minor restoration and renovation over the 72 year life of the Marianne Theater, it is an excellent example of quality workmanship and construction. While the interior of the theater has been allowed to deteriorate and become out of date, the exterior stands beautifully in near-original form as one of the last examples of the Art Deco/Moderne neighborhood movie theater.

The Marianne Theater retains excellent integrity of **feeling**. Feeling can be defined as a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time, resulting from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. With the original facade and marquee in place, this building is immediately recognizable as a theater and entertainment hub from the 1940s. The Art Deco/Moderne design elements of the structure make it stand out among the older structures that make up the majority of historic architecture in downtown Bellevue. The theater was created to stand out and attract attention and an audience. The maintenance of the building's original facade and footprint help the building continue to convey that feeling. Though the interior has begun to deteriorate, it remains in its original layout and helps maintain a sense of its historic feeling.

The Marianne Theater retains excellent integrity of **association**. Integrity of association, like integrity of feeling, is a cumulative effect of the physical aspects of a structure, and is dependent upon how well those aspects can convey the historical trends with which the structure is associated. The Marianne Theater's most significant associations, with the history of Bellevue and its entertainment culture and with postwar cinemas and cinema culture in America, are maintained and strengthened by the building's design, physical aspects and surroundings. The theater's location and setting are the same as they were when it was built, which ground the building within the community and its history. The location and setting, as well as the size of the theater, help establish the theater within the patterns of movie theater construction in the early 1940s. The theater's design and amenities, which in 1942 were considered ultra modern, and maintenance of its original materials, speak to the owner's sense of valuing its design qualities. The Marianne Theater easily conveys its associations with the patterns both in design and in cinema history, broad and local, and is significant to the city of Bellevue and its residents. This excellent example of a 1942 neighborhood movie theater is worthy of preservation.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Kentucky Post, December 29, 1986 p.4
Kentucky Post, November 6, 1989 p.4
Kentucky Post, May 4, 1992, p.3

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Bellevue, Campbell County MRA. NRIS 88000100. Copy of nomination on file at Kentucky Heritage
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Webster, Robert D. *The Balcony is Closed*. Covington, Kentucky: Kenton County Historical Society
(Campbell County Library – no copyright date or publication date)

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 # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____ CP-B-6 _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

Newport quad

Coordinates calculated via ArcGIS Explorer

Coordinates according to NAD 27: Zone 16; Easting 717 793.66; Northing 4331 614.60

Coordinates according to NAD 83:

1	<u>16</u>	<u>717 788.06</u>	<u>4331 822.72</u>	3	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>	4	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The area proposed for listing is the entire lot identified in the Campbell County Property Valuation Administrator (PVA) office under account number 999-99-05-926.00. That account's area corresponds with the PVA's former parcel identification, Lots 3 & 4 of Block I of the Harris Heirs Addition to the City of Bellevue. The theater is bounded on the south side by Fairfield Avenue. Starting from a point 75 ft east of the intersection of Fairfield and Ward Ave (Point A, latitude 39.108193, longitude -84.481155), north 135 ft (to Point B, latitude 39.108502, longitude -84.481452), east 63 ft (to Point C, latitude 39.108659, longitude -84.481312), south 135 ft (to Point D, latitude 39.108313, longitude -84.481008), then return west 63 ft to Point A.

Boundary Justification

This is the area that has historically been associated with the Marianne Theater. The theater consumes almost the entire parcel, and no smaller area is possible to propose as a boundary, nor larger area is appropriate to offer as the boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David Killen/Student
organization Northern Kentucky University date May 2014
street & number 28 Chalfonte Place telephone 859-781-6067
city or town Fort Thomas state KY zip code 41075
e-mail david.killen@cincinnatiastate.edu

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Photographs:

Name of Property: Marianne Theater
City or Vicinity: Bellevue
County: Campbell County
State: Kentucky
Photographer: Dave Killen
Date Photographed: April 2,6,18,25 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Primary Images:

0001.tiff: Front façade, shot to the west
0002.tiff: Front façade, shot to the northwest
0003.tiff: Marquee, detail, shot to northwest
0004.tiff: Front entrance with left and right entry and booth, to northwest
0005.tiff: Under the marquee
0006.tiff: Interior of theater, toward screen
0007.tiff: Interior of theater, away from screen

Supplemental Images

0008.tiff: Under the marquee, shot to west
0009.tiff: Left side entry door with ½ moon window lights, shot to northwest
0010.tiff: West side Marquee, shot to northeast
0011.tiff: "Marianne" letters above the marquee, shot to north
0012.tiff: West side glass block feature (A), shot to north
0013.tiff: front entrance, shot to east
0014.tiff: Front facade top detail, to northwest
0015.tiff: Ticket Booth, to northwest
0016.tiff: East side neighboring property, shot to west
0017.tiff: West side neighboring property, shot to northwest
0018.tiff: East side walkway/alley, shot to northwest
0019.tiff: Window detail, shot to
0020.tiff: Original marine light fixture in the west side walkway to alley, shot to north
0021.tiff: Interior
0022.tiff: Interior
0023.tiff: Interior
0024.tiff: Interior
0025.tiff: Interior of glass blocks

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0026.tiff: Cross street view, shot to northwest

0027.tiff: Cross street view, shot to south

0028.tiff: Cross street view, shot to southeast

0029.tiff: Fairfield Avenue, shot to east

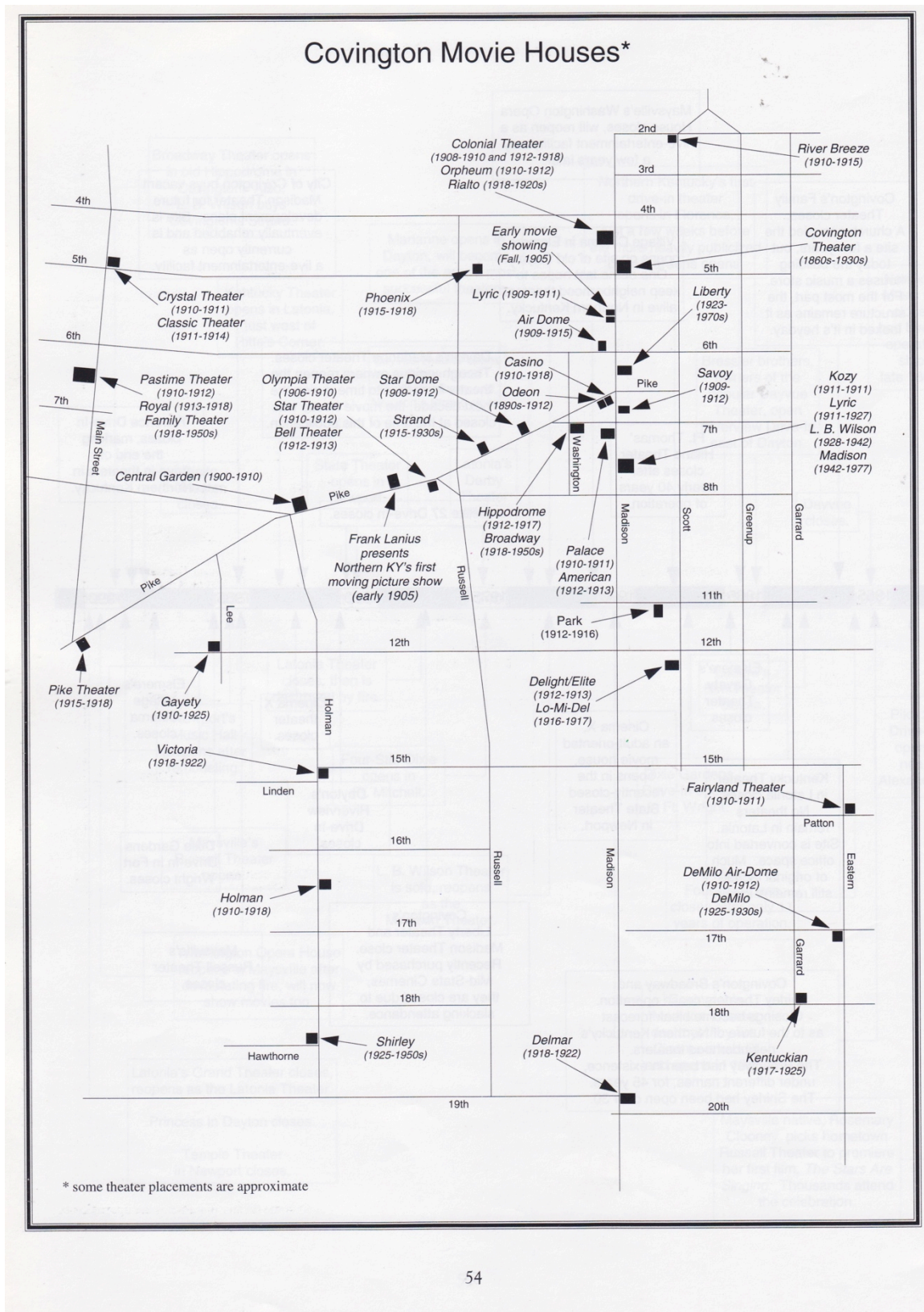
0030.tiff: Fairfield Avenue, shot to west

Property Owner:

name City of Bellevue
street & number 616 Poplar Street telephone _____
city or town Bellevue state KY zip code 41073

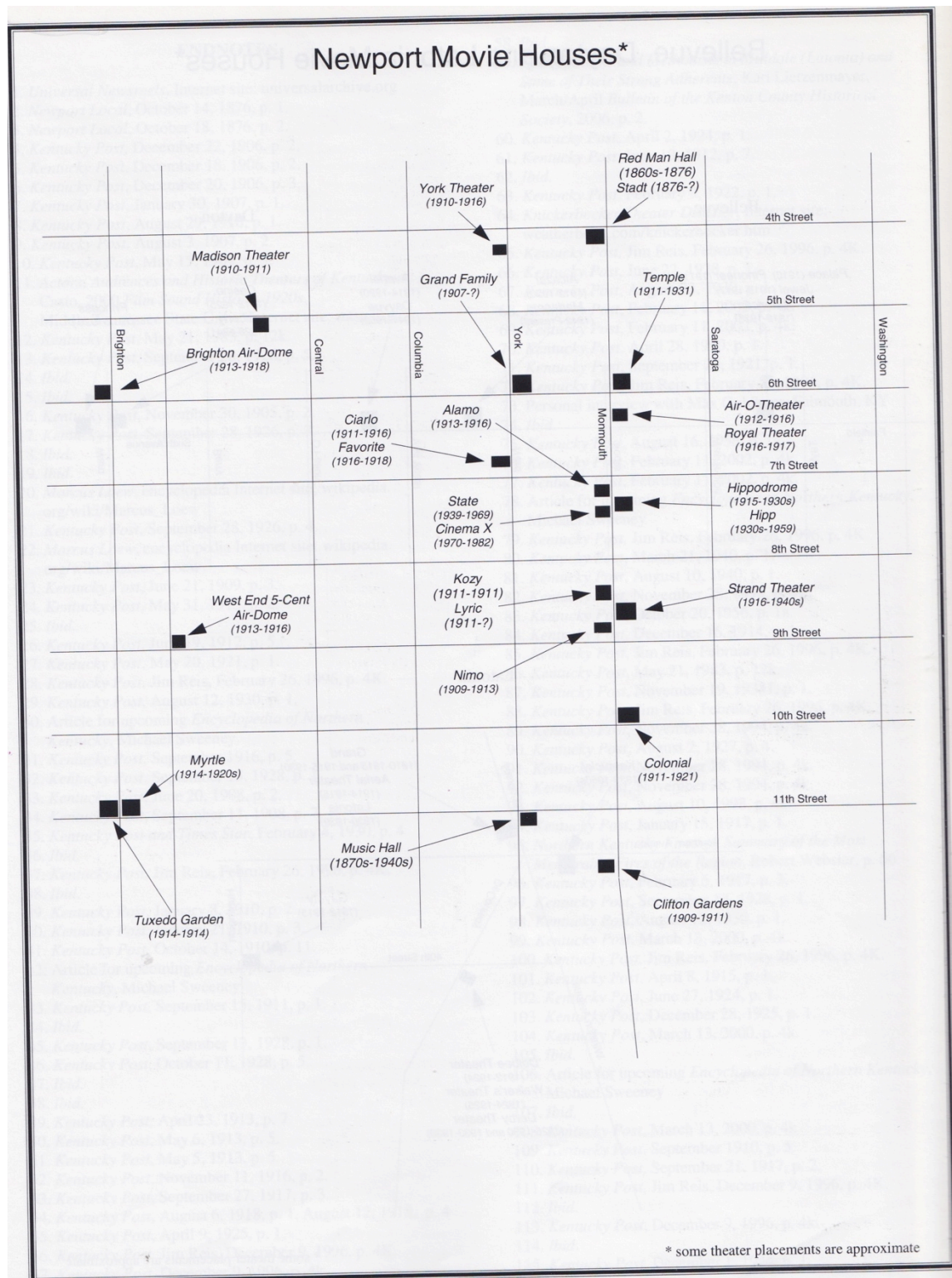
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