United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in 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  Colonial Theater
   other names/site number

2. Location
   street & number  55-57 Park Street  N/A not for publication
   city or town  Canton  N/A vicinity
   state  North Carolina  code NC  county Haywood  code 087  zip code 28716

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 forth 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 X locally. (□ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

   Signature of certifying official/Title  SHPD
   Date  1/10/00

   State of 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 commenting 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.  □ determined not eligible for the National Register.
   □ determined eligible for the National Register.  □ other, (explain:)  __________

   Signature of the Keeper  Date of Action

____________________________
____________________________
Colonial Theater

Name of Property

5. Classification

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<th>Ownership of Property</th>
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Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

6. Function or Use

<table>
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<th>Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>WORK IN PROGRESS: theater</td>
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7. Description

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<td>other</td>
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Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
Colonial Theater

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

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:

Western Office, Archives & History
Colonial Theater

Haywood Co., North Carolina

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .0795

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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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 Sybil Argintar Bowers, Preservation Planning Consultant

organization Bowers Southeastern Preservation date September 1, 1999

street & number 166 Pearson Drive telephone (828) 253-1392

city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28801

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 Town of Canton (William Stamey, Town Manager)

street & number P.O. Box 987 telephone (828) 646-3405

city or town Canton state NC zip code 28716

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 listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 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 20503.
The Colonial Theater is located in the heart of downtown Canton, North Carolina, on one of the main streets through town, Park Street. Canton is a small town located in a valley at the juncture of several mountain ranges in western North Carolina. The Pigeon River is located to the west of the town. The Theater faces north, bounded by Park Street and the town hall on the north, a parking lot on the east, an alley on the south, and a smaller one-story building and Adams Street on the west. The Champion Paper Mill, which is located on the north side of the Southern Railroad tracks behind the town hall, is clearly visible from the theater building. The nominated parcel is less than one acre.


The Colonial Theater is an example of a highly intact Colonial Revival style building which stands out in the landscape as being the only example of this style and as the only remaining theater of its time period in the town of Canton. The tall, two and one-half story, solid masonry building has an elongated, tapering form which extends from north to south. Built in 1932, it was designed for use as a theater, with the front portion of the building designed in the Colonial Revival style to look like a residential building. The remainder of the building is more typically a standard Commercial style, with plain, unfenestrated walls. Walls of the theater are brick, with the uninterrupted east and west side elevations divided by brick pilasters. The side gable roof at the front of the building is covered in slate. The roof and walls of the pedimented front-gable roof dormers at the front of the building are also covered in slate. The remainder of the roofline over the auditorium space is flat, with parapets that step down from front to back. Windows are six-over-six, double hung, on the upper level, with flat arch brick lintels and brick sills. Windows in the dormers are multi-light.

The front or north elevation of the building is five bays wide, with altered storefronts on either side of the center entrance. Walls of the storefronts are currently paneled, with stuccoed kickplates. Large display windows, dating to the 1960s remain intact. A ticket booth in the center of the entrance space, with aluminum-frame doorways on either side, was also a ca. 1960s change to the building. The cloth awning which currently projects from the building replaces the original marquee. A heavy wooden cornice remains intact on the elevation. At the northwest corner of this elevation, the building is notched in

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1Documentary photographs from the 1940 flood show the original configuration of these storefronts as projecting bay windows, capped by a latticework balustrade and posts with finials.
2Interview with Vernon Parker, former manager of the Colonial Theater from 1948–49, by Sybil Bowers, 6 March 1999. Mr. Parker said the original ticket booth projected out as an island onto the center sidewalk area.
configuration, with two original exterior wooden six-panel doors. Originally there was an open alley and stairs to enter the building at the second and third levels. This served as a fire escape on the second level and as a separate "colored" entrance on the third floor. A sloping plywood roof has been built to enclose this area.

The side or east elevation of the building consists of an unbroken solid brick wall, divided by brick pilasters, with a water table at the base. At the northeast gable end is a stepped gable wall. The roofline steps up here to a chimney with terra cotta chimney pots. An iron cyma-curve ornament decorates the upper chimney here and on the west elevation. The deeper red brick of the front facade changes to a lighter construction brick over the remainder of the building, with the deep red brick placed at the corner to appear as quoins. The south or rear elevation faces an alley, and is also of brick, divided by pilasters and with brick corbeling at the cornice. Window and door openings are covered by textured plywood paneling. A small one-story section with a brick smokestack projecting to the west, housed the original boiler room. This is no longer part of the theater building, and was a shared boiler system between the theater and the adjacent building to the west. The side or west elevation is essentially the same as the east side, with the exception of the notched area at the northwest corner described above.

The interior of the building, like the exterior, displays a high degree of architectural integrity and detail. It consists of an entry vestibule, lobby, and the main theater auditorium on the first level, a lobby/lounge area and balcony on the second level, and a projection room on the third level, to the rear of the balcony (see Exhibit A, floor plan sketch). Walls throughout the building are a swirled stucco, original to the building, and currently painted black. Lower floors are concrete, and upper are wood. Original doors throughout the building are wooden, six-panel. Almost all of the original light fixtures remain in place. While primarily Colonial Revival in style on the interior, there are also some Craftsman style elements. The entry vestibule floor beyond the ticket booth slopes up toward the theater lobby. An entrance on the east wall leads into one of the original retail spaces, which has had paneling added on the lower half of the plaster walls. Multi-light double doors, flanked by multi-light single doors with their original brass push bars, open into the theater lobby. Heavy crown molding is still in place. The current ticket booth projects into this space. The main theater lobby extends the full

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3Interview with Cora Mae Phillips, long-time resident of Canton and member of the Historical Commission, by Sybil Bowers, 22 March 1999. Mrs. Phillips remembers the walls always having this textured appearance, but they were not originally painted black. The original walls were more of a maroon color, to match the maroon curtains at the screen.
width of the building, with stairs on either end to the second level. A concession counter has been added along the south side of the lobby, below an original light well. Stairs are simple in design and are an element which are more in the Craftsman style. The balustrade consists of simple 2 x 2 railing divided by square, capped posts. Newel posts are simple angled boards. Original ceiling light fixtures still remain in the lobby, along with some of the original speakers. Open doorways remain in place on either side of the current concession counter, leading to the side aisles of the main auditorium. 4

Floors of the theater auditorium slope towards the stage and screen on the south wall. 5 The balcony cantilevers out over approximately half of the rear seating area. The theater contains approximately 650 seats, including the auditorium and the balcony, all of which appear to be original. 6 The upper portion of the auditorium walls are swirled stucco over brick with the lower half being smooth stucco scored to resemble cut stone blocks. Decorative, Classically-styled brackets support the balcony above, and most of the original ceiling fixtures are in place. The ceiling above the stage has decorative plaster applied to it. There are what appear to be long acoustical panels along the east and west walls. Two sloping walkways are located on either side of the stage area, leading to the rear doors. At the southeast and southwest upper walls of the auditorium, angled towards the stage, are openings covered by metal grills, framed by pilasters and capped by decorative plaster arches, which housed part of the original sound system.

The second floor lobby/lounge originally was one open area, with a smaller area located to the north. There is crown molding in this smaller area. More recently a plywood wing–wall and decorative iron grill were added, dividing the space into more definite "rooms". There is also an enclosed office area at the northeast corner of the building, which appears to be original. A metal railing above the light well is located along the south wall of the lobby. The ceiling here, with exposed rafters, slopes up from south to north, to accommodate the balcony space located on the other side. While not documented, it appears that the carpeting in the lobby/lounge may be original to the  

4Interview with Vernon Parker. Mr. Parker remembers there were originally curtains closing off the auditorium from the lobby.  
5According to the original lease for the building, a stage was built in the theater from the beginning. (Haywood County Deed Book 86, 531). Mrs. Phillips (interview 22 March 1999) also remembers a stage here, and noted it was a "disappearing" stage which could be folded down out of the way if needed.  
6Interview with Cora Mae Phillips. Mrs. Phillips does not remember that the seats were ever replaced.
building. At the northwest corner of the lobby/lounge the original door to the exterior is visible. The hollow clay tile and masonry construction is visible on the wall outside this door. An open doorway leads into the balcony from either side of the lobby. The stepped floor here is wood, covered by carpet. Rows of original seats remain in place on either side of the central aisle. The ceiling slopes up, following the gable roof configuration at the front of the building. A railing at the front of the balcony has a decorative motif of acanthus leaves. A wall fixture, more Art Deco in style, is located on the east wall. The rear section of the balcony, with no seats, but just a stepped platform, was where the "colored" customers were allowed to sit. At the northwest corner of the balcony, also at the third level, is a small storage area and an original exterior door. To the east side of the rear of the balcony is the entrance to the projection room on the third level of the building. Two of the three dormer windows visible from the front are located on the north wall of the projection room, with the third located in the storage area to the east of the projection area. Much of the original circuitry and several canisters of film are still located in this room, with discarded film strips lying on the floor. Walls and ceiling in this room are metal panels which served as a fire break between the projection room and the rest of the theater. Some of the panels have written instructions for operating the equipment.

7Interview with Cora Mae Phillips. On a walk through the building, Mrs. Phillips remembered that carpet being there for a very long time, at least from the 1940s and possibly before that.
Summary
The Colonial Theater opened on Park Street in downtown Canton on June 6, 1932. Benton & Benton, an architectural firm in Wilson, North Carolina, designed the theater and Canton builder Marion C. Sprinkle built the movie house. The Colonial Theater was the first facility in the town of Canton built specifically to house a modern motion picture theater, and it served as a central focus point of the town's social life through the 1960s. It is a rare example of the use of the Colonial Revival style for a movie theater, a distinction underscored by the name the owners gave the downtown business. Most theaters of the period in western North Carolina and across the state were built in the Art Deco style. The Colonial Theater is significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an intact Colonial Revival style motion picture theater, and under Criterion A for its contributions to the entertainment and recreational development of the town of Canton.

Historic Background and Entertainment/Recreation Context
The town of Canton was a small mountain community located in the Pigeon River Valley until the beginning of the twentieth century. In keeping with the booming economy and growth in tourism in all of western North Carolina at the time, many visitors came to the mountains and to Canton looking for places to buy land, develop business ventures, or build a summer or permanent home. One of these visitors to Haywood County was Peter G. Thomson, a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, who worked for Champion coated paper Company. The company at this time was looking for an area that could supply it with its own supply of wood pulp. The vast forest resources of the county drew Mr. Thomson to the area, and he bought 40,000 acres of land around Haywood County for this purpose. He then began looking for a place for a pulp mill for the Champion company. The town of Canton had what he needed, and in 1906 he purchased a large parcel of river plain land and began construction of the Champion Fibre Company mill complex. Production began in 1908, employing 650 workers. By 1923, paper began to be produced at the mill, and in 1924, over 1,000 people were employed by Champion. Canton, like many mountain communities, began to develop into an industrial community, drawing local people away from farming as a livelihood and into working in the mills.

Before Champion arrived in Canton, the population was only 230 people. By 1910, once the mill was running, the population had increased to 1,393. By 1920 the population was

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9Ibid.
2,584 and by 1930 had reached 5,117. Workers at the mill were primarily from the mountain area, but many managers and scientists came to the area from all over the world, turning Canton into a diverse community. Along with the development of the mill, commercial enterprises within the town began to develop in the 1910s and 1920s to support the growing population. By 1916, there were over fifty businesses in the downtown area. Some of these included McGee's cash store; a dentist; Canton Studio; Champion Bank; Martin's Drug; C. T. Wells, undertaker; Andrews & Mayo, meats; Model Pressing Club; Canton Hardware; Buff Leghorn Poultry; O. M. Smathers, men's clothing; Canton Bicycle and Repair; Medford & Traylor, grocery; Redfoot Jeweler; Gaiety Theatre; Canton Steam Laundry; Canton Business College; and Tipton Furniture. From 1910 to 1920, much of the commercial center of town was rebuilt and many wooden commercial buildings were replaced with more substantial brick structures. By 1930, Canton was "...a thriving industrial town". All the streets were well defined, most buildings were masonry, and the commercial core of town appeared much as it does today. Some of the businesses listed in newspaper ads of the early 1930s included the Canton Cafe; Raiffs Department Store, Hampton & Smather's men's clothing; Canton Bakery; Champion Bank & Trust Company; Canton Building & Loan; Nelle's Beauty Shop; Pressley Brothers; Hampton and McCracken furniture; Canton General Auto Repair; and Smather's Dairy. In addition to the growth in industrial and commercial development in the town, new housing developments and new schools were built all over Canton through the 1920s and early 1930s to keep up with the population growth and need for additional services.

By 1932, at the time the Colonial Theater opened in downtown Canton, there was certainly the population to support a theater of its kind. While building in most western North Carolina communities ground to a sudden halt with the 1929 crash, the construction of a privately funded theater in 1932 of the caliber of the Colonial Theater was highly unusual for the time. Canton, however, did not suffer economically through the early years of the Depression as much as some other communities, due in large part

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11Ibid, p. 33.
12Ibid, p. 36.
15Ibid, p. 50.
16Ibid, p. 37.
18The Architecture of Our Home Town, p. 38.
to the presence of the Champion mill. The Champion plant expanded in the 1930s, "...installing the industry's widest, fastest, and most cost-efficient paper machine...". It was not until later in the decade, when Champion sold some of its land holdings to the United States Forest Service for national forest land, that the production of the mill began to slow down.

The lot where the Colonial Theater now stands was originally part of the W. J. Hampton Estate. On July 1, 1929, this particular parcel, Lot 9, was willed to Mrs. W. T. (Nova) Sharp. Nova B. Sharp deeded the property to E. E. Clark and Marion C. Sprinkle on July 9, 1931, and then Clark deeded the entire parcel to Sprinkle on July 13, 1931. The building ownership remained in the Marion Sprinkle family until February 4, 1956, when Sprinkle's wife, Berta, deeded the property to Sprinkle Real Estate Company, which then deeded the property to the town's Board of Alcoholic Control on March 11, 1981. The Alcoholic Control Board deeded the property to the Town of Canton on September 9, 1986.

Marion C. Sprinkle, owner of the Canton Laundry, Ice and Coal Company, began development of the theater building in November 1931. Although there are no drawings remaining (they were burned in a fire), from the Benton & Benton firm of Wilson, North Carolina, it appears that this firm, comprised of Charles C. Benton and his brother Frank W. Benton, were the architects for the building. Much of the work of the firm was in the Colonial Revival and Neoclassical styles. In fact, Charles Benton was known as "Charles Colonial Benton", another indicator that the Colonial Theater in Canton was indeed designed by this firm.

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19Ibid, p. 51.
22Haywood County Deed Book 84, p. 395 and 84, p. 506.
23Haywood County Deed Book 166, p. 243.
26Levine, Katherine. "A History of the East Haywood County Townships: Beginnings to 1980," Unpublished essay, 1980. Mrs. Levine cites an article in the Canton Enterprise newspaper from October 13, 1932, which notes the opening date of June 6, 1932 for the theater and mentions that Benton & Benton of Wilson, NC were the architects. Unfortunately, many of the Enterprise papers no longer exist to fully verify this source.
27Tom Butchko, preservation consultant in Elizabeth City who has studied Benton's work in the eastern part of the state, upon looking at photos of the Colonial Theater, noted that much of the attention to detail
The theater was built primarily by local builders, with the contract for the labor given to J. G. Robinson and G. M. Keever of Canton, the plumbing done by G. W. Young of Canton, and the heating and cooling systems installed by the National Theater Supply Company of Atlanta. The original estimate for construction was between $40,000 - $50,000. According to the original lease of the building to W. H. Odum, Sprinkle agreed to "... erect a theater building with proper stage on the lot...and which will have a seating capacity, including the gallery...of not less than six hundred and fifty people. Said building to be completed by the first day of July, 1932...". According to this same lease, Odum, who had previously resided in Canton, and had leased the Strand Theater, agreed to lease the building for a period of five years, with the first year's rent, upon completion of the building, to be "...ten percent of the entire cost of the building including the architect's fees...". W. H. Odum, as the lessee, agreed to "...furnish all the seats, fixtures and equipment for the theater except the stage scenery, which scenery is part of the building...".

The Colonial Theater grand opening gala was Monday evening, June 6, 1932. Grand opening events included a stage show for local talent, plus a duo known as Vaudeville Brice and Ivory, playing trumpet and piano. Even though silent movies had been shown in years previous at the Strand Theater on Main Street, there had never been a movie theater this large or this luxurious built in Canton prior to the opening of the Colonial. The original front facade of the building included two projecting multi-light bay windows for retail space, capped by a Chippendale balustrade with urn finials at the corner posts. The original marquee on the building was square, but this was replaced in 1939 with a "...new, modern marquee...".

in the Colonial Revival style was evident on the building, as on many of those in the east. Mr. Butchko noted that it appeared it was likely the Colonial was designed by Benton & Benton.

28 "Contract for $40,000 Theatre Let at Canton".
29 Haywood County Deed Book 86, p. 531.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 "$50,000 Theater to Open Monday," Asheville Citizen, 5 June 1932.
33 Interview with Vernon Parker.
34 See documentary 1940 photo in the working file.
The Colonial was designed as the most modern motion picture theater of the day and with the ability to show color movies with sound. The disappearing (collapsible) stage in the front of the main auditorium was used through the years for vaudeville, bluegrass, and country music shows, and movies were shown seven days per week, with a matinee and two evening show times daily. Children could see movies all day on Saturday for one admission price. Some of the movies shown at the theater from the late 1930s to the early 1940s included "Dick Tracy"; "Topper"; "Lost Horizon"; "Rosalie"; "Big Broadcast of 1938"; "It Happened One Night"; "Jezebel"; "Block-Heads"; "Boy's Town"; "Alexander's Ragtime Band"; "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs"; "Jesse James"; "Ice Follies"; "Good-bye Mr. Chips"; "The Wizard of Oz"; "Gulliver's Travels"; "Dumbo"; and "Gone with the Wind". Many other first-run movies were shown, with a different feature every day or two.

In addition to the movie features, there were other participatory activities for the theater audience. One of these was "bank nights", which began in the mid-1930s and continued through the 1940s. On these nights there was a drawing for a cash prize. Participants would get a ticket with a stub to go into a big wheel. Between the two shows for the evening, the manager or a child from the audience would spin the wheel and a winning number would be drawn. The winner would take the "bank", or, if no one was present to claim the prize, the pot would grow for the next week. Another activity which often took place was a game called "Screeno". For this, members of the audience would each have a bingo card. The projectionist would then spin an arrow on a board projected onto the screen, and stop on letters. The winner would get a ten dollar prize.

Concessions were never sold in the theater, but the retail space at the northwest corner of the building operated as the Colonial Soda Shop. Patrons of the movies would often gather here for refreshments either before or after the shows. The other retail space

36Ibid. Some of the stage shows Mr. Smathers noted in his diary included, in 1938, "Fred Kirby and His Smiling Cowboys" and the "Arizona Ranch Girls". Stage entertainment in 1939 included "Tennessee Ramblers" and "Delmore Brothers".

37Ibid. Mr. Smathers detailed every movie shown at the Colonial in this time period, as well as documenting movies shown at theaters in Asheville and Waynesville. Included in his notes were the dates shown, title of movie, and stars. A copy of this journal is included in the working file for this nomination.

38Interview with Vernon Parker, manager of the Colonial Theater in the late 1940s, by Sybil Bowers, 6 March 1999. Mr. Smathers' journal also mentions these bank nights, most of which took place on Thursday evenings. He recorded the amount of money won each time.

39Interview with Vernon Parker.
operated as a barber shop for a while, and later a concessions operation was located there, although this was still not considered to be within the theater building itself. Patrons could buy candy and drinks there.\textsuperscript{40} In the late 1940s, prices for movie tickets were nine cents for children (if prices were over ten cents, tax had to be collected), and thirty-five cents for adults.\textsuperscript{41} The lounge on the second floor of the building was used as another social gathering space where people could meet between shows. There was a separate "colored" entrance on the third level, reached from the outside stairs, but these patrons were not allowed in the lounge area.\textsuperscript{42}

W. H. Odum continued to lease the building through part of 1936. Marion Sprinkle leased the building on March 9, 1936 to J. E. Massie for ten years beginning in the middle of 1936. Rents were $287.50/month in 1936, $300/month in 1937–38, $312.50/month in 1939–40, and $325/month from 1941–1945.\textsuperscript{43} Mr. Massie immediately sub-leased the building to Cardinal Amusement Company. This sub-lease included all the same stipulations set forth in his agreement with Marion Sprinkle, and included the sale of all the equipment in the building and a half interest in the equipment in the soda shop to Cardinal Amusement Company for the sale price of $26,500.\textsuperscript{44} The lease also stated that "...J. E. Massie agrees to not engage in the show or amusement business in Beaverdam Township during the term of this lease or any renewal thereof...".\textsuperscript{45}

On September 10, 1945, Marion Sprinkle leased the Colonial Theater to Publix Bamford Theatres of Delaware. This lease period was from January 1, 1946 to December 31, 1955.\textsuperscript{46} Publix then sub-leased the building to Weldon Theatre Corporation of Statesville, North Carolina on August 29, 1952.\textsuperscript{47} The 1952 lease included an inventory of equipment in the building, some of which may have been original fixtures. The recorded furnishings included the ticket machines and display boards (in the "box office"); display frames and coming attractions displays (in the "front of theater"); a

\textsuperscript{40}\textsuperscript{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{41}\textsuperscript{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{42}\textsuperscript{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{43}\textsuperscript{Haywood County Deed Book 95, p. 229.}
\textsuperscript{44}\textsuperscript{Haywood County Deed Book 95, p. 231.}
\textsuperscript{45}\textsuperscript{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{46}\textsuperscript{Haywood County Deed Book 153, p. 353. Publix Bamford Theaters ran theaters in Canton, Asheville, West Asheville, and Bristol, Tennessee (Interview with Billy Wolcott, formerly associated with Publix Theaters, by Sybil Bowers, 1 April 1999).}
\textsuperscript{47}\textsuperscript{Deed Book 153, p. 353.}
popcorn machine, display case, hot plate, and crushed ice container (in the "candy room"); an end table, flag, and marquee letters (in the "stock room"); a ticket chopper, floor lamps, water cooler, carpet, leather covered benches, and stair carpets (in the "lobby of theatre"); chairs, leather covered benches, carpet, a divan, love seat, candy vending machine and floor lamps (in the "upstairs lobby"); 170 seats and carpet in the aisles (of the "balcony"); 450 seats and carpet in the aisles (of the "auditorium"); a traveler curtain, drapes, screen, and automatic curtain puller (on the "stage"); a step ladder and hose (in the "boiler room"); a wooden cabinet, desk and chair, safe, typewriter, desk lamp, and carpet (in the "office"); and a monitor, lamps; rewind, generator, electric fan, soda and acid extinguisher, ceiling fan, and Western Electric Sound equipment (in the "machine room").48

Soon after the Colonial Theater began operations, Marion Sprinkle also leased the Strand theater from R. W. Sherrill on November 21, 1935. This was a five year lease, at a rent of $160/month.49 Marion Sprinkle then sub-leased the Strand Theater building to J. E. Massie on December 3, 1935.50 By leasing the Strand, Sprinkle helped to insure that the "competing" theaters were part of his business, and were not running the same movies at the same time.

The Colonial Theater remained as the central focus of the town's social life from its opening through the 1960s. During the August 30, 1940 flood in Canton, the theater closed briefly and was showing movies again by September 3, 1940.51 The Strand Theater on Main Street, and another theater, the Imperial, at the corner of Main and Academy Streets, also operated through the 1960s, but never drew the crowds that the Colonial did. Theaters in Waynesville such as the Park and the Strand, also showed first-run movies. Some residents of Canton went to see movies in Asheville, often at the luxurious Imperial Theater there (built in 1922), but the Colonial in its prime was every bit as elaborate. As in many small towns, residents began to find new places to go for entertainment as transportation became easier and commercial development spread out from downtown.

48Ibid.
49Haywood County Deed Book 94, p. 541.
50Haywood County Deed Book 95, p. 227.
51Floods on Pigeon River, Vicinity of Canton and Clyde, North Carolina, Knoxville, Tennessee: Tennessee Valley Authority, February 1959, p. 29. This publication noted that the Colonial Theatre was damaged on August 30 with rugs and seats damaged. Water stood twenty-six inches deep in the barber shop at the front of the theater building and Smathers, Carol. "Movies Shown at the Colonial Theater".
Architecture Context

The Colonial Revival style of the Colonial Theater in Canton is the only example of this style in the town of Canton and possibly the only example for movie theaters in general across the state. It is quite different from the other brick two and three-story primarily standard Commercial style buildings located throughout the downtown, and was also unique and more refined in its design in comparison to the earlier Strand theater in Canton. The Strand was built in a more typical Commercial style, and was later converted to retail use. The Colonial Theater was built to look more like a residence than a business. It stands alone on the street, surrounded even in the 1930s primarily by smaller buildings, automobile repair shops, and service stations. The use of a gable roofline in the front with a parapeted roof to the rear also stands out as an unusual design element among primarily flat-roofed commercial buildings.

In comparison, Charles Benton, as part of the firm of C. C. Benton & Sons Architects by this time, designed the Mimosa Cinema in Morganton (1939) in an Art Deco style. Other theaters in western North Carolina built close to the time of the Colonial Theater but also in the Art Deco style include the Parkway Theaters in West Jefferson (ca. 1940), the Lyric Theater in Sylva (ca. 1927), currently quite altered from its original design, and the Fine Arts Theater in Asheville (1946). One unusual theater, the Alva Theater in Morganton (1929) was designed in a Spanish Revival style.

Charles Collins Benton (1888–1960) was a native of Wilson, North Carolina, and was educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He began practicing architecture in Wilson in 1907. Frank Warthall Benton went into partnership with his brother Charles beginning in 1915, and continued as an architect on his own after 1935 designing many WPA projects in Wilson. The Benton & Benton firm existed from 1915–1935. Most of the firm's work was in the eastern part of the state, but they also worked in western North Carolina.
Some of the work of the Benton & Benton firm (1915–1935) in Greenville, North Carolina included the William H. Long House (1917); and the Albion Dunn House (ca. 1919). Other work in the eastern part of North Carolina included Fire Station No. 1 in Rocky Mount (1924); the Bank of Farmville, the Selma Graded School, and the Montgomery County Courthouse. The firm also designed the Mimosa Cinema in Morganton (1939) in an Art Deco style. However, the Colonial Theater is more modest than some of their other existing commercial buildings. For example, the Gold Professional Building (1910) in Wilson, designed by Benton & Moore, is a much larger, more elaborately detailed Neoclassical building than the Colonial Theater. However, like the Colonial, it is carefully detailed with many Classical elements. Another theater, no longer extant, that was designed by Charles C. Benton in the Colonial Revival style was the Pitt Theatre (1935) in Greenville, North Carolina. The Imperial Theater Building (1931) in Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina was also designed by Benton & Benton, in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The Fire Station in Rocky Mount is a smaller building in scale like the Colonial, but has more of a Mediterranean or Spanish Revival style, with a tile roof.

Additional buildings designed by the Benton & Benton firm in Edenton, North Carolina include the Colonial Revival style William D. Pruden, Jr. House (1927); and the Neoclassical style Citizens Bank of Edenton (1924). Benton & Benton also designed the Colonial Revival style Claude Augustus Harrison House (1934); and the Classical Revival Peoples Bank (ca. 1917) in Williamston, North Carolina, and the Farmers Banking and Trust Company Building, in a Neoclassical style (1921) in Robersonville.

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60 Mearns, Kate. Central City Historic Buildings Inventory, Rocky Mount, North Carolina, Rocky Mount: Central City Revitalization Corporation, 1979.
Major Bibliographical References

"Berta Sprinkle." Waynesville Mountaineer. 8 June 1981.
"Contract for $40,000 Theatre Let at Canton." Waynesville Mountaineer. 19 November 1931.
Haywood County Deed and Plat Books
Haywood County survey files. Western Office, Archives & History, Asheville, North Carolina.
Parker, Vernon. Former theater manager. Interview, 6 March 1999.
"$50,000 Theater to Open Monday." Asheville Citizen. 5 June 1932.
Wolcott, Billy. Formerly associated with Publix Bamford Theaters. Interview, 1 April 1999.
Boundary Description
The boundaries of this nomination are indicated on the accompanying county tax map, and include all of lot 8781. (Pin number 8657–70–8781)

Boundary Justification
All of the property currently associated with the Colonial Theater was historically part of the original tract of land purchased by Marion Sprinkle for development of the theater (Haywood County deed book 84, page 395 and deed book 84, page 506).
Colonial Theater Photographs

The following information applies to all of the photographs, except where noted.

Name of Property: Colonial Theater
55–57 Park Street
Canton
Haywood County
North Carolina

Photographer: Sybil Argintar Bowers
Date of photos: May 1999
Location of original negatives: Division of Archives and History
One Village Lane
Asheville, North Carolina 28803

1. Front elevation, view SE
2. Main auditorium and balcony, view NE
3. Ceiling medallion in auditorium
4. Decorative bracket under balcony
5. Balcony, view NW
6. Second floor, view E
7. Projection room, view E
8. Side elevation, view W
This map is prepared for the inventory of real property found within this jurisdiction, and is compiled from recorded deeds, plats, and other public records and data. Users of this map are hereby notified that the aforementioned public primary information sources should be consulted for the verification of the information contained on this map. Haywood County assumes no legal responsibility for the information contained on this map.