State Register Number:



NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE 901 S. STEWART STREET CARSON CITY, NEVADA 89701

NEVADA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES Nomination Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic name: Cactus Theatre Other names: Cinadome Theatre, Old Glory Theatre

2. LOCATION

Street Address: 405 6 th Street			
City or Town: Hawthorne	County	: Mineral	Zip : 89415
Original Location? 🖂 Yes	No No	lf no, dat	e moved:

3. OWNERSHIP & CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property: Private Owner Name: Old Glory Theatre Co. (non-profit) Owner Address: 245 Summit View Dr., Walker Lake, NV 89415

Number of Resources within Property

Buildings	1
Sites	
Structures	
Objects	
Total:	1

FOR OFFICIAL USE:				
Nomination Received	Senate #	Assembly #		
Listing Criteria 🗌 A 🗌 B 🗌 C	□ D □ E			
A. BOARD OF MUSEUMS AND HISTORY				
As the chair of the Nevada Museums and History Board, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for listing in the Nevada Register of Historic Places.				
Signature of the Chair		Date		
B. STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE				
As the Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for listing in the Nevada Register of Historic Places.				
Signature of the State Historic Preservatio	n Officer	Date		

5. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic Use/Function: Movie Theater Intermediate Use/Function: Movie Theater Current Use/Function: Currently being rehabilitated for use as a movie theater

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- <u>X</u> Criterion A Property is associated with events or trends that have made a significant contribution to Nevada history.
- Criterion B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant to Nevada's past.
- <u>X</u> Criterion C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction significant to Nevada, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ____ Criterion D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important to Nevada's prehistory or history.
- **Criterion E -** Property reflects cultural traditions important to historic or pre-historic peoples of Nevada. (Nevada State Register only).

Criteria Considerations

- Criteria Consideration 1 The property is religious in nature, but is primarily significant for its architecture, or is the only remaining or best remaining resource from an historic community.
- Criteria Consideration 2 The property has been reconstructed, but is an accurately executed reconstruction and is located in an environment that replicates its historic setting.
 - Criteria Consideration 3 The property achieved significance within the past fifty years but is rare or exceptional.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Area(s) of Significance	Architecture & Entertainment/Recreation
Period of Significance	1946-1996
Cultural Affiliation(s)	N/A
Significant Person(s)	N/A
Architect/Builder(s)	Stran-Steel Corporation

Narrative Statement of Significance:

The Cactus Theatre in Hawthorne, Nevada is significant under Criterion A in the area of entertainment and recreation for its value to the city of Hawthorne as a cinema for close to a century, and under Criterion C for its Quonset Hut form, a distinctive architectural type unique for theaters. The use of the military-type architecture derived from the theater's location near the world's largest ammunitions depot during World War II. The theater building therefore represents the town and its contributions to the war efforts of the early 20th century.

History of Hawthorne, Nevada

In 1881, Hawthorne was just a stop on the Carson and Colorado Railroad, which was extending south toward the now gone boomtown of Candelaria. There is a legend, as there usually is with Nevada mining towns, that the area of Hawthorne was chosen to be settled by a man's burro, who found this spot in the valley of the Wassuk Range to be the least windy.¹ In 1883, Esmeralda County moved its seat from Aurora, situated in the mountains above Hawthorne's valley, to Hawthorne. In 1900, Hawthorne's population was a mere 436.²

In 1905, the Southern Pacific Railroad built a new railway to ease the strain of the overburdened silver mines in Tonopah. The new railroad ran east of Walker Lake, therefore bypassing Hawthorne completely and instead stopped in Mina, 30 miles south. This was the first of many economic blows – a pattern that seems to persist today in Hawthorne, with businesses coming and going and the population booming and dwindling – that devastated the economy and made the future look very bleak. This resulted in the county seat being taken away from Hawthorne and moved this time to Goldfield.

Fortunately for the small town, a large silver deposit was struck in 1909 at the nearby Lucky Boy mine, transforming Hawthorne from a railway stop to a mining town. The finding led to a rise in population, which caused Esmeralda County to split in two, being that the booming Hawthorne was too far from the county seat in Goldfield. In 1911, Mineral County was created with Hawthorne as the county seat. However, by the 1920s the mining dried up, and similar to mining towns of the day, a 1926 fire wiped out most of the town's infrastructure.³

¹ Permanent Collection, 2023, Mineral County Museum, Hawthorne, NV.

² Mineral County, Nevada, Recorders Office.

³ "Hawthorne, Nevada," Hawthorne, Nevada government website. accessed April 7, 2023. <u>http://mineralcountynv.us/departments/index.php</u>

Meanwhile, the U.S. Government was looking for a new area for holding the country's ammunition, and found Hawthorne, Nevada to be the perfect spot. In 1918, there was a major disaster in New Jersey, where stored bombs went off in the middle of the populated area where they were stored, killing approximately 100 people.⁴ The reason for establishing this new base in Nevada was to find a place very isolated and far from widely populated areas to store the country's bombs and ammunition. Hawthorne, being a mining bust town with heavy fire damage, in a location far from other developments, was the perfect location. This created the industry that keeps the town of Hawthorne afloat to this day. Not only is the base in Hawthorne now the world's largest ammunitions depot, but it is the only place in the country where the United States' bombs are sent to be detonated once they expire.⁵

The base was established in 1930 as Naval Ammunition Depot Hawthorne.⁶ At this point, with the creation of the new base, the town's population grew to over 700. But as 1940 came and the United States' involvement in World War II became imminent, Hawthorne's population exploded again, this time to 13,000 people.⁷ The need for housing prompted the construction of Babbitt, a government housing facility immediately northwest of Hawthorne. Babbitt consisted of cheaply constructed houses quickly built for the newcomers, all of which were completely abandoned by the 1970s and demolished by the 1990s.⁸

Since World War II, Hawthorne's population has risen and fallen with each war. But in more recent years, the base has reduced its number of employees and now the town's population sits at around 2,000 people. Recently, it was announced via press release that the Nevada National Guard will begin training soldiers in Hawthorne – so there is potential for yet another boom on the horizon.⁹

Movie Theaters in the Early 20th Century

By the 1920s, cinemas became widespread in the United States, quickly overtaking forms of live entertainment. Within the decade, 20,000 theaters were built, with millions of Americans attending their screenings. Even vaudevillian venues began to add film showings and existing buildings like churches and dance halls transformed into cinemas overnight.¹⁰

The competition between theaters, as well as the changing tide of the country creating a need for escapism with movie goers, prompted many theaters to be built with extravagant architecture, nicknamed Movie Palaces for their opulence. Period Revival architecture was popular in the 1920s, and many theaters adopted those Revival styles and incorporated Baroque, Renaissance, or even Egyptian themes. The Art Deco style became popular at the end of the 1920s and also became a popular choice for theater design. The 35mm or 16mm film used as the only means for projection from the inception of cinema up until the early 21st century as the only means for

 ⁴ Felix, Elving. "Morgan Ammunition Depot Explosion: Topics in Chronicling America: Introduction," Library of Congress Research Guides, n.d.. Accessed April 8, 2023. <u>https://guides.loc.gov/chronicling-america-morgan-ammunition-explosion</u>.
⁵ "World's Largest Ammunition Depot: World Record in Nevada," 2023. Accessed February 15, 2023.

https://www.worldrecordacademy.org/2023/2/worlds-largest-ammunition-depot-world-record-in-nevada-423129. ⁶ Hawthorne Army Depot," United States Army Joint Munitions Command website, n.d. Accessed June 6, 2023. https://www.jmc.army.mil/Installations.aspx?id=HawthorneOverview.

⁷ "Hawthorne," Nevada Travel Network, n.d. Accessed April 8, 2023. <u>https://www.nevadatravel.net/location/hawthorne/</u>.

⁸ Unknown. Cracking Windows of Memories in Mineral County, 2010.

⁹ Ranson, Steve. "Gun Range Planned for Nevada Guard in Hawthorne." *Nevada Appeal*, August 8, 2022. Accessed April 8, 2023. <u>https://www.nevadaappeal.com/news/2022/aug/08/gun-range-planned-nevada-guard-hawthorne/</u>.

¹⁰ "Art Deco Cinemas, Picture Palaces, and Movie Theaters," n.d., *Decolish*. Accessed September 17, 2023. <u>https://www.decolish.com/ArtDecoCinemas.html</u>.

projection is extremely flammable, which required many of these buildings to be closely monitored by inspectors and permitters when built, which is another reason many of these historic theater buildings were built so well and remain today.¹¹

Cinemas During World War II

During World War II, unlike Germany who shut down cinemas for a short while before releasing infamous Nazi propaganda films, the United States continually used the newly built cinemas across the country to keep citizens informed. The entire entertainment industry changed, with the government interfering for the first time in what should and should not be shown to audiences during a time of distress. War films, our own propaganda, were made that showed war in a positive light, portraying protagonists as heroic and unaffected by the realities of war. Newsreels were also made and distributed to every theater throughout the country. These government made films were also intended to help grieving families through the loss of loved ones and inform viewers on other dangers, such as spies in their own country.¹²

History of the Quonset Hut

Quonset Huts are defined by the quick erection of arched metal frames and purlins which connect them together. The floor of these buildings is almost always concrete. The standard for this structure was invented and coined in 1941 during World War II in Quonset Point, Rhode Island at the Navy Seabee Base. These were based on the semi-cylindrical Nissen Huts that the British developed out of World War I. The Nissen Hut was a much smaller version of the American Quonset Hut, usually measuring only 8 feet in width and devoid of any insulation. The standard Quonset Hut is 20 feet in width, with the interior built out like a more permanent structure – i.e., with insulation, and sometimes multiple rooms on the interior. The curvature also differs in the two styles, with the Nissen Hut's roof sitting at a curvature of 210 degrees and the Quonset Hut's roof always at an even 180. These prefab structures were secure, cheap, quick to erect, and easy to transport, making them ideal for World War II, with an estimated 150,000 to 170,000 being built in that time.¹³

History of the Cactus Theatre

The Quonset Hut for the Cactus Theatre is by Stran-Steel Corporation and was constructed in 1946.¹⁴ The prefabricated structure was assembled on site from steel ribs and a metal skin. Although the Cactus Theatre was unique on the outside, it was constructed like a standard cinema on the inside. Inside was a concession stand and a theater room with Art Deco metal theater seats which still sit in the theater today. The building had modern air conditioning and heating when it opened, along with projection equipment and acoustical material on the walls.¹⁵

The Cactus is located one block from E Street – or Main Street – in Hawthorne. This is directly across from another theater in town, the Desert, which was constructed a decade prior. The Desert Theatre was constructed out of wood and was split in two – a side for white people and a side for Black people – with a bar on the white side. Fortunately, the Quonset Hut build of the Cactus fared better over the years, as the Desert has been abandoned since the 1960s and its

¹¹ Rommel, Bryan. American History Goes to the Movies. New York: Routledge, 2011.

¹² Stones, Barbara. *America Goes to the Movies: 100 Years of Motion Picture Exhibition*. Hollywood, CA: National Association of Theater Owners, 1993.

¹³ Rogers, J., David. *Nissen and Quonset Huts*. Missouri University of Science & Technology presentation. Accessed April 2023. <u>https://web.mst.edu/rogersda/umrcourses/ge342/quonset_huts-revised.pdf</u>.

¹⁴ "New Theatre to Open This Week," *Mineral County Independent*, May 8, 1946.

wooden roof is sagging inward. The Desert will be demolished in 2023 (unless someone steps in to save it). Besides the Cactus and the Desert, there was also the Mineralite Drive-In Theatre (now demolished), a cinema in Babbitt (now demolished), and a cinema on the base for military only (building still extant but is no longer a cinema).

The Cactus Theatre's opening film in 1946 was "The Bells of St. Mary," which was the highest grossing film of 1945. Up until the 1960s the Cactus Theatre would play mainstream films such as these, but at the start of the 1970s when a new wave of independent films was born, the Cactus began to play lower-brow, lower-budget films, which were cheaper and easier to obtain of than first-run wide releases. Examples of double features shown at the theater are as follows: Straw Dogs & Dagmar's Hot Pants; Two-Lane Black-Top & See No Evil; Ben & Myra Breckinridge; Kansas City Bomber; and Beyond the Valley of the Dolls. Theaters that played these films, referred to as "exploitation films" or "midnight movies," were referred to as "grindhouse theaters."

A film genre that was fairly new to audiences that fit into this exploitation category was pornographic films. The Cactus Theatre would often play pornography – typically once a month, according to the old calendars. If the Cactus Theatre were to be known for one thing – the theater's claim to fame – is the fact that it was the first theater in Nevada to play the widely popular pornographic film "Deep Throat" starring Linda Lovelace in 1972. "Deep Throat" was a sensation, being one of the first pornographic films to have a story line, and to this day, is one of the highest grossing films of all time. People from all over the state and beyond traveled to Hawthorne to attend a screening of this film at the Cactus Theatre.

Besides "Deep Throat," residents of Hawthorne have also reminisced about other memorable screenings from around this time, such as midnight "Rocky Horror Picture Show" screenings with a live cast acting out the film in front of the screen, and screenings of "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" wherein after the film was over, a masked man with a chainless chainsaw would burst into the theater scaring the patrons.

In 1996, the Cactus Theatre closed for the first time, with its last showing being the 1996 film "Courage Under Fire." It sat empty for two years, until the building's owner, Chuck Knight, met a man named John Holt living in Tonopah who ran movie nights at the Elks Lodge. Chuck enlisted him to take over the theater. When John took over, he changed the name of the Cactus Theatre to the Cinadome Theatre, painted over the Cactus lettering on the marquee, and painted the wood paneled interior of the lobby neon colors. He ran the theater from 1998 to 2012 when taxes were left unpaid and the power to the theater was physically cut from the building. In the final years of the Cinadome Theatre, films were not shown; it became a venue for kids to come in with video game consoles to hook up to a digital projector placed in the 35mm projection booth to play video games on the big screen. The lobby also became an area for kids to play board games and puzzles.

After it was shuttered, it was purchased by Earl Lewis in a tax auction, but he never set foot inside. In 2021 he passed away, and his son put the theater on the market. It was purchased by Kansas Bowling, who later formed the Old Glory Theatre Co. non-profit, which is the current owner of the building. The non-profit is currently rehabilitating the building to reopen as the Old Glory Theatre – a revival house playing only 35mm prints, that will feature a collection of artwork and movie memorabilia honoring veterans in Nevada and veterans in film.

8. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Style or Type: Quonset Hut / Military

Materials Foundation: Concrete Walls: Steel Roof: Steel Windows: None Other:

Narrative Description:

The Cactus Theatre is on 6th Street in Hawthorne, Nevada, one block west of E Street, the town's Main Street. The parcel is on the corner of D and 6th. The semi-cylindrical building is oriented on an east-west axis, with the semi-circular side elevations facing west and east, and the front entrance on the long south elevation. In front of the building, between the building and the sidewalk, is a small asphalt parking lot with room for approximately five cars. Behind the building to the north are apartment buildings and to the east across an alley is a now abandoned auto repair shop and gas station that faces E Street. Across 6th Street to the south is the other abandoned theater in town, the Desert Theater. Across D Street to the west is another historic building, the Sixth Street School, an Art Deco former elementary school built in 1936. The Sixth Street School is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as well as the Nevada State Register. The Cactus Theatre is also not far from the other two recognized NRHP-listed buildings in town; the Mineral County Courthouse and the USO Building.

The building is constructed from steel arched ribs set on a concrete foundation. The resulting semi-cylindrical form is clad in corrugated metal cladding, and each of the vertical semi-circular end walls are also clad in metal. The building footprint measures 80 feet long by 40 feet wide. At the eastern end of the long south elevation is a shed-roofed awning with a sheet metal roof and lally pole supports. The awning shelters the building entrance, which consists of two single entry doors that flank a small projecting ticket booth with windows, and two film poster frames. There are no other doors or windows on the south, east, or north elevations. The west side elevation has two single exit doors, one at each building corner. Both doors have simple metal awnings and open onto short paved walkways that connect to the D Street sidewalk. The west elevation also contains two rectangular vents.

Inside, the floor is made of concrete, at grade and level to the ground in the lobby space, but slanted downward below the street level inside. The lobby has a ticket booth attached to the front entrance for ticket taking. The lobby space and its corresponding projecting room above are located at the eastern end of the building, while the theater space is a larger space to the west. Inside the lobby, there is a concession area and two bathrooms toward the back. The walls of the lobby are 1970s wood paneling that were painted neon pink, green, orange, and baby blue. Unfortunately, through much experimentation and trial and error trying to remove the paint it was determined that removing the paint would destroy the vintage paneling, so the lobby is currently in the process of being painted red, white, and blue.

In the lobby, there is a stairway leading to the projection room. The stairway walls are made of unpainted wood paneling. The projection room currently has the original theater projector, that

was used until the theater closed, and a 35mm platter system. There is a window inside the projection room facing into the theater, so those watching could look up and view the platter system in operation.

Besides the projection room, the upstairs also has a closet for marquee letters, an HVAC equipment room, and a cry room. A cry room is a room parents would take their young children to watch the movie in if they were causing a disturbance. It is upstairs behind glass, with the original drive-in speakers from the Mineralite Drive-In providing sound for the room. The cry room has five seats that match the seats in the main theater.

Although the building is curved, the interior walls of the theater space are squared off by thin partition walls with wood paneling and burlap decorative curtains. This creates two small rooms on the side of theater where the building curves. These rooms are currently being used for storage. The ceiling of the theater space has a non-historic drop ceiling.

The wooden interior walls were not built until the mid 1960s. Before that, movies were watched in the original arched room, which had thin metal cladding over its curved walls and ceiling. In 1962, the art teacher from Mineral County High School – a Hawaiian man named Mr. Turada – painted murals of palm trees on both sides of the curved theater walls. These are now obscured by the squared walls, but can be seen when inside of the storage closets.

The theater space holds 190 seats in traditional theater seat rows. The seats are original and are in their original configuration. The seats are metal, with fabric seats and backs. The end caps of each row feature an Art Deco design. The seats have recently been restored.

The screen in place is from the 1960s. There are currently many spitballs stuck to it. In an effort to clean the marks off the screen from kids throwing things at it, the previous owner painted over the screen with white paint. This is not supposed to be done, because the screen in place has a certain reflection to it meant for celluloid projection. It is undetermined as of now if the screen can still be used or if it needs to be replaced. Behind the screen is where the speakers are kept. The speakers currently in place are also from the 1960s and are in working order. In each corner of the theater next to the screen are emergency exits that use the two exterior doors at D Street.

Though Hawthorne used to have four movie theaters and a drive-in, the Cactus Theatre, soon to be renamed the Old Glory Theatre, will be the only operating movie theater in the county and the only movie theater in Hawthorne that retains a high level of historic integrity. The Cactus Theatre is of great cultural and architectural significance locally, not only a rare building type that is still extant, but also for its association with Hawthorne's military history. The building followed military trends with its Quonset Hut construction during World War II, which helps reflect the town of Hawthorne's motto – "America's Patriotic Home."

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 0.13 acres

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated area includes the whole 0.13-acre property with parcel number 001-134-11, described as follows: Lot 20 and the South 13 feet of Lot 19, Block 54 as shown on the Official Plat of the Town of Hawthorne

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the entirety of the theater building's footprint, consisting of the entire parcel on which the theater rests.

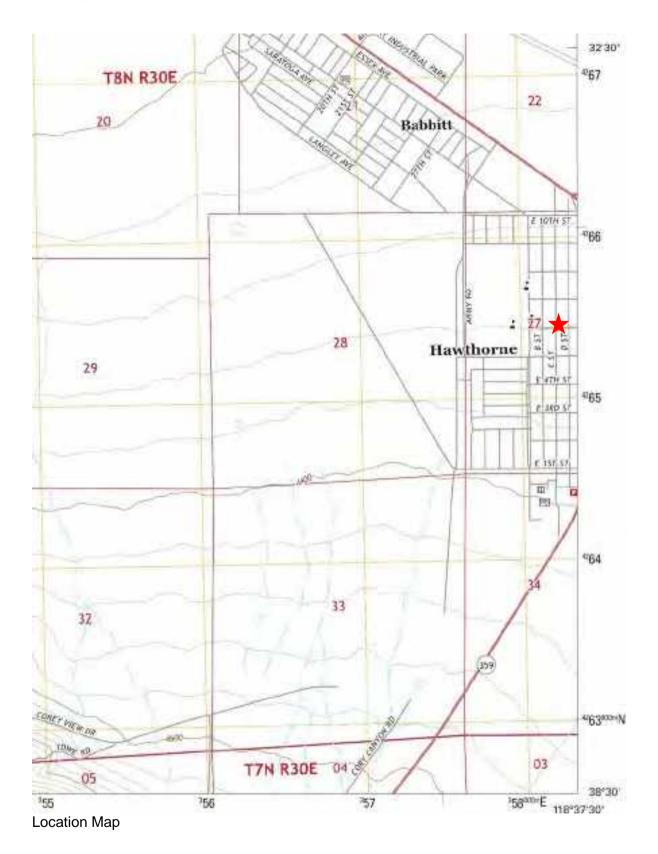
Geo-Referenced Location: 11 S 358323.42 m E 4265459.83 m N

Source and method of UTMs: Google Earth Pro, accessed Nov. 2, 2023

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Kansas Bowling, President Organization: Old Glory Theatre Co. Address: 405 6th Street City or Town: Hawthorne State: NV Telephone Number: Redacted Date: October 2023

Zip: 89415 **E-mail:** bowlingkansas@gmail.com





Location Map



Location Map

New Theatre to Open This Week Opening of the Cactus theatre in Hawthorne has been set for Saturday or Sunday, it was announced ie today by the management of the Desert theatre. The new theatre, R located directly north of the Desert 'n theatr, will feature on its opening bill, "The Bells of St Mary's," starring Ingrid Bergman and Bing Crosby. In order to avoid indefinite delays in obtaining materials to construct their complete building, the theatre operators acquired one of the new stransteel structures which has been assembled in record time. Interior of the building has been lined with special accoustic material and the sidewalls have been modernly arranged with a convex surface to provide proper diffusion of sound. Modern projection equip. ment has been installed, and new loge-type upholstered chairs are being installed now by a factory representative. The fireproof building will be adequately cooled during the summer months by large air-conditioning units, while heating during the winter will be provided by a large modern furnace unit. When materials become available the exterior of the building will be completed under a plan which will provide quarters for several small stores or shops facing Sixth street. Explaining that both the Caclus and Desert theatres will feature "big" pictures, the management referred to the program this week when the Desert plays "The Dolly Sisters" while the Cactus features "Bells of St. Mary's". Operation of the two theatres will permit a greater range of booking and thus many stellar attractions will not have to be passed over until second run. Actual opening date of the Cactus had not been determined at the time this paper went to press but local theatre patrons will be given advance announcement before Saturday or Sunday, whichey er day is designated.

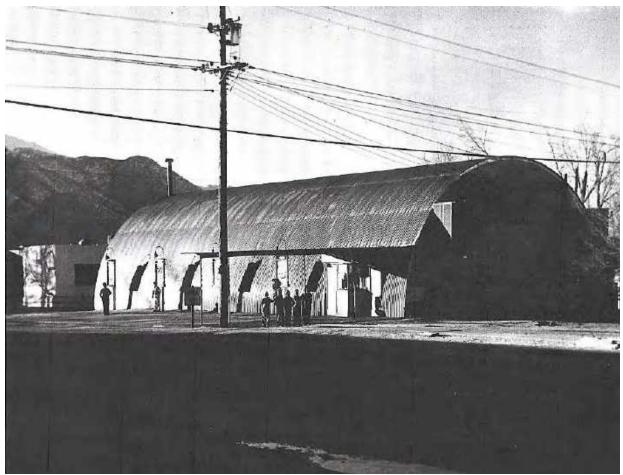
"New Theatre to Open This Week," Mineral County Independent, May 8, 1946.



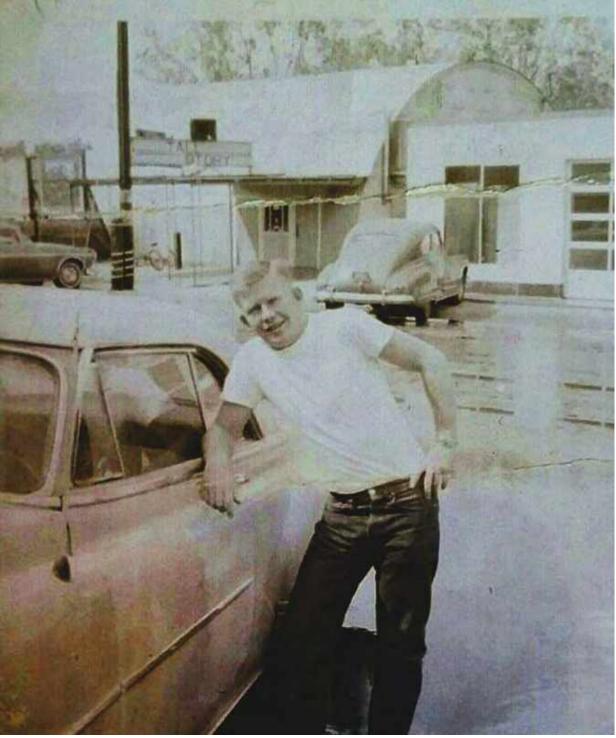
Theatre under construction in 1946 Photographer unknown, 1946 Image courtesy of Harold W. Fuller



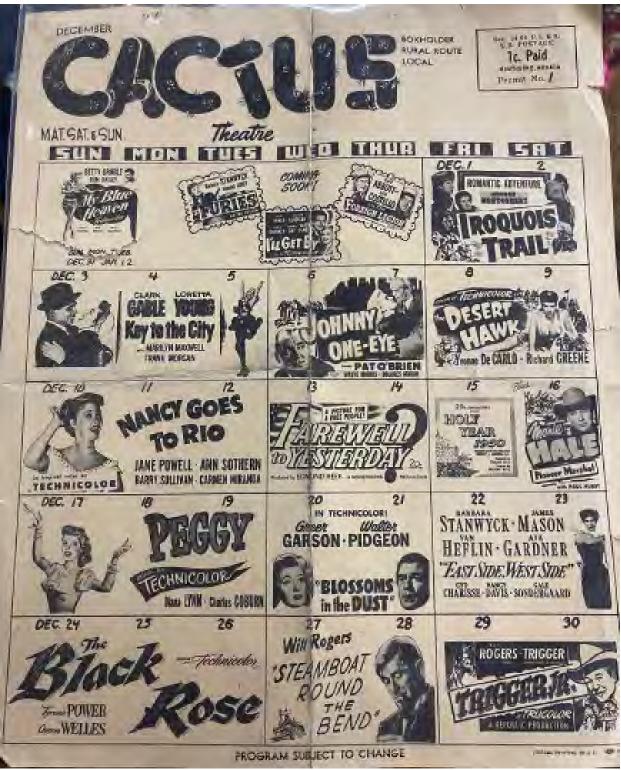
Theatre under construction in 1946 Photographer unknown, 1946 Image courtesy of Harold W. Fuller



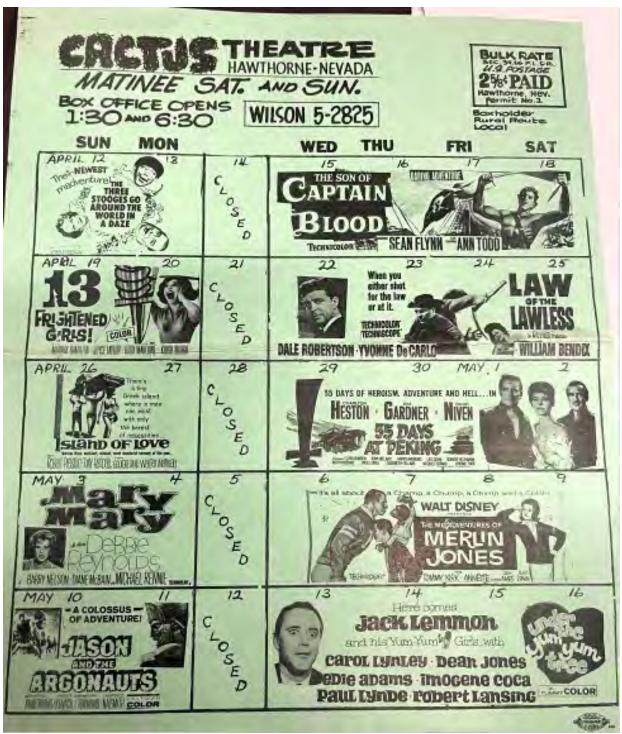
Theatre in the 1950s before marquee was installed Photographer unknown, 1950s Mineral County Museum Archives



Theatre in 1960 with first marquee advertising the 1960 film Tall Story Photographer unknown, 1960 Image courtesy of Karli Martindale



Cactus Theatre calendar from December 1950 Mineral County Museum Archives



Cactus Theatre calendar from 1964 *Mineral County Museum Archives*



Cactus and Desert Theatre calendars from May 1956 Mineral County Museum Archives



Cactus and Mineralite Theatre calendars from September 1961 Mineral County Museum Archives



Cactus Theatre in c. 1997 after closing for the first time in 1996 Photographer unknown, c. 1997



Cactus Theatre before reopening with new ownership in 1998 as the Cinadome Theatre *Photographer unknown, c. 1998*



Cinadome Theatre in 2006 Photographer unknown, c. 2006



Cactus Theatre in 2021 when it was purchased by what is now the current ownership *Kansas Bowling*, 2021



Cactus Theatre in 2023 Kansas Bowling, 2023



Current marquee on the south side of the building *Kansas Bowling*, 2023



South elevation Kansas Bowling, 2023



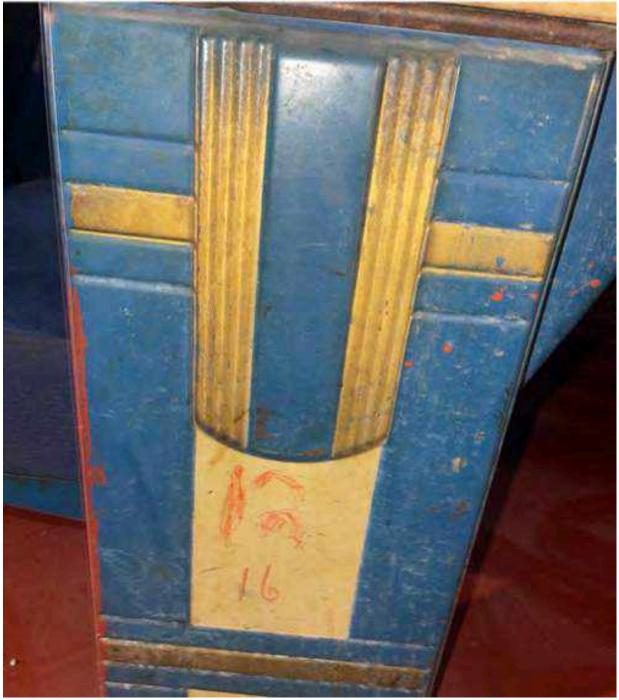
North elevation Kansas Bowling, 2023



West elevation Kansas Bowling, 2023



East elevation Kansas Bowling, 2023



Original art deco theatre seats Kansas Bowling, 2022



Interior of the building and theatre seats *Kansas Bowling*, 2021



Original curved exterior wall with 1962 mural, with 1960s interior framed wall on right *Kansas Bowling*, 2023



Theatre entrance and view of original curved exterior wall and 1960s interior wall *Kansas Bowling*, 2023



Lobby with rehabilitation in progress *Kansas Bowling*, 2023



Lobby concession stand with rehabilitation in progress *Kansas Bowling*, 2023



Staircase leading upstairs to the projection room *Kansas Bowling*, 2023



Projection room with the original 35mm projector *Kansas Bowling*, 2022



