

## COLORADO CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY

Official Eligibility Determination  
(OAHF use only)

OAHF1403

Rev. 9/98

## Architectural Inventory Form

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Date \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_  
 Determined Eligible – National Register  
 Determined Not Eligible – National Register  
 Determined Eligible – State Register  
 Determine Not Eligible – State Register  
 Need Data  
 Contributes to eligible National Register District  
 Noncontributing to eligible National Register District

## I. IDENTIFICATION

1. Resource number: **5RT.260** Parcel number(s): **145030002**  
 2. Temporary resource number: **N/A**  
 3. County: **Routt**  
 4. City: **Steamboat Springs**  
 5. Historic Building Name: **Chief Theater**  
 6. Current Building Name: **Chief Plaza**  
 7. Building Address: **811/813 Lincoln Avenue**  
 8. Owner Name: **Michael D. Barry**  
 Owner Organization:  
 Owner Address: **P.O. Box 773795**  
**Steamboat Springs, CO 80477**



44. National Register eligibility field assessment:

**Not Eligible**

Local landmark eligibility field assessment:

**Not Eligible**

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### II. GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

9. P.M.: **6th** Township: **6N** Range: **84W**  
**NE ¼ of NE ¼ of NE ¼ of NW ¼ of Section 17**
10. UTM reference (Datum: NAD27)  
 Zone: **13** **344517 mE** **4483131 mN**
11. USGS quad name: **Steamboat Springs, Colorado**  
 Year: **1969** Map scale: **7.5**
12. Lot(s): **Lot 2 Block 30**  
 Addition: **Original Addition of Steamboat Springs** Year of addition: **1884**
13. Boundary description and justification:  
**This legally defined parcel encompasses, but does not exceed, the land historically associated with this property.**  
 Metes and bounds?: Describe:

### III. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

14. Building plan (footprint, shape): **Rectangular Plan**
15. Dimensions in feet: **Length: 140 feet x Width: 50 feet**
16. Number of stories: **1**
17. Primary external wall material(s): **Brick**
18. Roof configuration: **Barrel Roof**
19. Primary external roof material: **Earth Roof**
20. Special features: **Facade Treatment/False Front**
21. General architectural description:  
**The Chief Plaza theater building is a single-story building, of brick masonry construction. The impressive symmetrical façade fronts onto the wide concrete sidewalk fronting Lincoln Avenue on the northeast elevation. Entrances into three retail spaces, currently occupied by the "Chief Plaza Theater," "Yippie-i-o," and "Visia Sunglasses, Hats, Watches, Accessories," penetrate the façade wall. The entry into the theater is within a centered recessed entryway, set within a distinctive rounded arch. A set of paired, stained natural brown, glass-in-wood-frame entry doors, lead from within the arched entryway into the theater lobby. These distinctive doors feature large (bronze?) metal door handles with an Indian Chief Head motif. The doors are also flanked by distinctive sidelights, and topped by a transom light, all with (bronze?) metal Art Deco designs. Similar metal Art Deco designs flank the façade wall to either side of the entryway arch. The recessed entryway is flanked on either side by a single-light fixed-pane storefront display window. Each of these windows has a projecting sandstone sill, and is covered by canvas awnings. Entry doors, leading into Yippie-i-o and Visia, are respectively located at the southeast and northwest ends of these façade. Both of these are stained dark brown glass-in-wood-frame doors, with (bronze?) metal Art Deco designs. Both of these doors are topped by flat arches with central keystones. The head of a longhorn cow motif is affixed to the keystone over the door at the southeast end of the façade. A large marquee for the theater projects over the sidewalk in front of the centered, arched, entryway. The façade wall itself is made of brown brick, laid in running bond, with brick columns at either end. A parapet wall extends above the roof line, culminating in a centered gabled parapet, located above and behind the marquee. The building's name "CHIEF PLAZA" appears in large block letters, centered above the marquee, on the wall of the gabled parapet. The top of the parapet wall all along the façade is finished with sandstone coping. The building's rear (southwest) elevation is made of rough-formed concrete over brick construction. Two steel**

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service entry doors are located at either end of the rear elevation. A small portion of the upper northwest (side) elevation is visible. The wall here is also composed of rough-formed concrete over brick construction. The southeast (side) elevation wall is not visible because it abuts the adjacent building.

22. Architectural style: **Early Twentieth Century Commercial Style**  
 Building type:
23. Landscape or special setting features: **This building is located on the southwest side of the 800 block of Lincoln Avenue (U.S. Highway 40), in downtown Steamboat Springs. The historic, 1905, First National Bank Building is located immediately to the southeast at the corner of Lincoln Avenue and 8th Street. The Homesteader shop, at 817 Lincoln Avenue, abuts this building's northwest elevation.**
24. Associated buildings, features or objects: **Not Applicable**

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### IV. ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

25. Date of construction: Estimate: Actual: **1926**  
 Source of information: **Routt County Assessor, Commercial Property Appraisal Record; Sanborn Insurance map, June 1920.**
26. Architect: **Unknown**  
 Source of information: **N/A**
27. Builder: **Arthur E. Gumprecht**  
 Source of information: **Bettger, Susan, and Meyer, Susan. "It Was The Largest Theater in Northwest Colorado, The Chief Theater." *Three Wire Winter*, Winter 1987, pp. 37-41. Located in clipping file at the Tread of Pioneers Museum.**
28. Original owner: **Harry Gordon**  
 Source of information: **Bettger, Susan, and Meyer, Susan. "It Was The Largest Theater in Northwest Colorado, The Chief Theater." *Three Wire Winter*, Winter 1987, pp. 37-41. Located in clipping file at the Tread of Pioneers Museum.**
29. Construction history:  
**The Chief Theater was constructed by local builder Arthur E. Gumprecht in 1926. When completed, the 140' by 50' single-story building had a seating capacity of 500, and was acclaimed as the largest theater in northwest Colorado. In addition to the theater seating, historic interior elements also included a stage, an orchestra pit with a player piano, expensive dark red carpeting with a yellow floral design, and heavy thick curtains. The building displayed Native American motifs throughout, with a concession stand named the "Kiva", and with an array of Indian symbols painted on the ceiling and along the top of the walls. In the early 1930s, an artist named Bob Smith created a series of Indian motif paintings which were prominently displayed in the auditorium and lobby. The original façade featured a center box office and entryway, flanked by glass cases where movie posters were displayed. The entryway was flanked on either side by large fixed-pane display windows and entry doors which entered other retail businesses located in the theater building.**
- The building's façade was remodeled in the mid-1960s, with what was termed an "Alpine" or "Nordic, Scandinavian" style façade. At the same time, the building's name was changed from the Chief Theater to the Village Theater. The Theater's current façade dates to 1986-1987, when the building was again extensively remodeled. At that time, the large single theater inside was replaced by two smaller theaters, each with approximately 100 seats.**
30. Original location:  Moved: Date of move(s): **N/A**

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### V. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

31. Original use(s):                    **Recreation and Culture/Theater**  
    **Commerce and Trade/Specialty Store**
32. Intermediate use(s):            **Recreation and Culture/Theater**  
    **Commerce and Trade/Specialty Store**
33. Current use(s):                    **Recreation and Culture/Theater**  
    **Commerce and Trade/Specialty Store**

34. Site type(s):                        **Movie Theater, with associated retail shops.**

35. Historical background:

**Much of the information in this Historic Background narrative was obtained from the article "It Was The Largest Theater in Northwest Colorado, The Chief Theater," written by Susan Bettger and Susan Meyer for the publication *Three Wire Winter*, in 1987. This well-researched and written article is located in a clipping file at the Tread of Pioneers Museum.**

**Sanborn Insurance maps indicate that this lot was initially developed in the years prior to 1911. A Sanborn Insurance map published in July of that year depicts a single small building, labeled "vac." (vacant) near the front center of the property. A circa 1910 plat map depicts perhaps the same building at this location labeled "Tailor Smith." The 1920 Sanborn map depicts three somewhat larger buildings all fronting directly onto Lincoln Avenue. These are respectively labeled "jewelry", "mill'y" (millinery), and "rest." (restaurant). By 1926, these relatively small (probably wood frame) buildings had been removed as construction on the Chief Theater building was begun that year. Mark Schafermeyer, who owned the property in the mid-1920s, deeded it to Harry "Chief" Gordon in 1926. Gordon then hired Art Gumprecht, a well-known local builder to oversee the theater's construction. Of Native American descent, Harry Gordon had spent much of his life in Oklahoma where he reportedly made a fortune in lead, zinc and silver mining.**

**When it opened in early 1927, the Chief Theater was Steamboat Springs' second motion picture house, but it was the first to feature "talkies." In earlier years, the Alden Theater (located across Lincoln Avenue in the Allen's Clothing building) offered silent movies. "Idle Rich" was reportedly the name of the first "talkie" shown in the Chief Theater.**

**Harry Gordon owned the theater until 1936, when he sold it to John Grieve. Mr. Grieve then owned it for nearly three decades, before eventually selling the building and business to George Fick in 1964. Fick replaced the name Chief Theater with Village Theater, and gave the building a new "Alpine" or "Nordic, Scandinavian" façade. Fick, in turn, sold the building to Mike Barry in 1970. Barry relinquished ownership of the theater in 1978, but ended up re-acquiring it in 1986. He has owned it continuously from that time to the present (2007).**

**Under Barry's ownership, the building's interior and façade were extensively remodeled in 1986-1987, and the building was renamed Chief Plaza, in honor of the theater's original name and its original owner Harry "Chief" Gordon.**

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36. Sources of information:

**Alexandroff, Marty. "Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Architectural Inventory Form." February 1996, on file with the City of Steamboat Springs, and the Colorado Historical Society Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.**

**Bettger, Susan, and Meyer, Susan. "It Was The Largest Theater in Northwest Colorado, The Chief Theater." *Three Wire Winter*, Winter 1987, pp. 37-41. Located in clipping file at the Tread of Pioneers Museum.**

**Klein, Naomi. "Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Inventory Record." May 1981, on file with the City of Steamboat Springs, and the Colorado Historical Society Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.**

**Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph/ Mountain Bell Telephone Directories for Steamboat Springs, 1956 – 2007. On file at the Denver Public Library, Western History Department.**

**Routt County Assessor, Commercial Property Appraisal Record.**

**Sanborn Insurance maps for Steamboat Springs, July 1911, June 1920.**

**"Steamboat Springs, Co. About 1910." Plat map, on file at the Tread of Pioneers Museum.**

**Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Routt County Colorado, Precinct 1, Steamboat Springs.**

### VI. SIGNIFICANCE

37. Local landmark designation:    Yes            No     Date of designation:

Designating authority:

38. Applicable National Register criteria:

A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history;

B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;

C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguished entity whose components may lack individual distinction;

D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Qualifies under Criteria Considerations A through G (see Manual).

Does not meet any of the above National Register criteria.

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Steamboat Springs Standards for Designation:

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Not Applicable | A. Its character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of Routt County, the State of Colorado, or the United States. |
| Not Applicable | B. Its location as a site of a significant historic event.   |
| Not Applicable | C. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of Routt County.   |
| Not Applicable | D. Its exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, or historic heritage of Routt County.  |
| Not Applicable | E. Its portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style.                                    |
| Not Applicable | F. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.  |
| Not Applicable | G. Its identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of Routt County.                            |
| Not Applicable | H. Its embodiment of elements of architectural design, detail, materials, and/or craftsmanship that represent a significant architectural innovation.                |
| Not Applicable | I. Its relationship to other distinctive areas that are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on an historic, cultural, or architectural motif.        |
| Not Applicable | J. Its unique location or singular physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, a community, or Routt County.  |

39. Area(s) of significance: **Not Applicable**

40. Period of significance: **Not Applicable**

41. Level of significance:      National:                      State:                      Local:

42. Statement of significance:

**This building is historically significant for its associations with Steamboat Springs' commercial development from the time of its construction in 1926. It has been in continuous use as a movie theater from that time to the present. It is also architecturally notable, to a modest extent, for its early twentieth century commercial architectural characteristics. Due to a rather substantial loss of integrity, though, the building does not qualify for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places or in the State Register of Historic Properties. The building also probably lacks the integrity to qualify for individual listing in the Routt County Historic Register. The building would rate as a contributing resource within a potential National Register historic district, however.**

43. Assessment of historic physical integrity related to significance:

**This well-maintained landmark building has a modern (circa 1986-1987) façade and interior. While in keeping with the building's historic Native American theme, the building's current façade is significantly different than the historic façade. As a result, the building displays a below average standard of historical integrity, relative to the seven aspects of integrity as defined by the National Park Service and the Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation - setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. A sense of time and place relative to the historic theater building is now only partially in place.**

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### VII. NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT

44. National Register eligibility field assessment: **Not Eligible**  
 Local landmark eligibility field assessment: **Contributes to designated or potential designated historic district**
45. Is there National Register district potential? Yes  No  
 Discuss: **Historic buildings in the core area of downtown Steamboat Springs may collectively possess the historical and/or architectural significance, and display sufficient physical integrity, to comprise a National Register historic district.**
- If there is National Register district potential, is this building: Contributing  Noncontributing N/A:
46. If the building is in existing National Register district, is it: Contributing Noncontributing N/A:

### VIII. RECORDING INFORMATION

47. Photograph number(s): **CD #s 10, 12, 14, Images 191, 207, 259-261.** CDs filed at: **City of Steamboat Springs**
48. Report title: **Historic Building Inventory of Downtown Steamboat Springs** **137 10th Street**
49. Date(s): **06/22/07** **Steamboat Springs, CO 80477**
50. Recorder(s): **Carl McWilliams**  
**Timothy Wilder**
51. Organization: **Cultural Resource Historians**
52. Address: **1607 Dogwood Court**  
**Fort Collins, CO 80525**
53. Phone number(s): **(970) 493-5270**

# Architectural Inventory Form

## Sketch Map



# Architectural Inventory Form

## Location Map

