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# ALABAMA REGISTER OF LANDMARKS & HERITAGE NOMINATION FORM

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY - DATE ADDED: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: The Pastime Theatre  
and/or Common Name: The Pastime Theatre

## 2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 1052 US Hwy 43  
City: Winfield  
State: Alabama County: Marion Zip: - 35594  
Is the property located within the city limits?  Yes  No  
USGS Quad Map: Winfield, AL Township/Section/Range: 13S/17/12W

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

Category:  Building(s)  District  Structure  Site  Object  
Ownership:  Public  Private  Both  
Status:  Occupied  Unoccupied  Work in progress  
Public Acquisition:  In process  Being considered  
Accessible:  No  Yes: restricted  Yes: unrestricted

## 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

Name: City of Winfield Telephone: 205 487 4337  
Street & Number: 111 Bankhead Hwy  
City or Town: Winfield State: AL Zip: - 35594  
Email: admin@winfieldcity.org

## 5. FLOOR PLAN & SITE PLAN

**Attach sketched floor plan. If the property includes more than one building, submit a site plan showing the locations, dates of construction, and uses of the buildings.**

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## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Construction date:	1937	Source:	Elwood Smith
Alteration date:	November 2000 - February 2003	Source:	Robert Henger
Architect/Builder:	Arlon Trull, Penny Trull, Al Smith	Contractor:	Local laborers
Physical condition: (Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Ruinous)	Excellent	Remaining historic fabric: (High, Medium, Low)	High
No. of stories:	1		
Historic use of property:	Recreation/culture (movie theatre and live vaudville productions)		
Current use of property:	Recreation/culture, education (performing arts, seminars)		
Architectural style category:	Modern Movement	Architectural style sub-category:	Art Deco
Basic typology:	Other (brick, concrete)	Basic shape:	Rectangular
Basic floor plan:	Unknown (typical theatre)	Historic Construction material(s):	Brick, concrete, stucco
Current exterior wall material(s)	Brick, stucco, concrete	Roof finish material(s):	Other (membrane)
Main roof configuration:	Flat	Foundation material:	concrete
Porch type:	Entry porch N/A		
Window type and materials:	N/A		
Describe alterations:	Stabilized building, replaced floor, replaced roof, removed ceiling tiles, and stripped inside to brick walls. Replaced electrical and plumbing. Removed paint from outside brick. Installed new marquee.		
Number and type of all outbuildings: (if significant, fill out separate survey form)	0		
Exterior Architectural Description:	<p>Typical small theatre. Front-yellow brick, stucco and stucco pilasters          Outside walls-red brick          Coping - dark brown glazed tile</p>		
Description of Setting:	<p>Located at intersection of US Hwy 118, 43 and 253, in the middle of downtown Winfield</p>		

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## 7. SIGNIFICANCE

Criteria (check all that apply and explain below). See Instructions for more information.

**Criterion A:** Associated with historical events and activities relating to the property that are important to the history of the community, state, or nation.

**Criterion B:** Person or group with whom the property is associated is important to the history of the community, state, or nation.

**Criterion C:** Type, period, or method of construction represents architectural features that are significant in the development of the community, state, or nation.

**Criterion D:** Property has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in Alabama's history or prehistory (archaeological component).

### AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (check all that apply and explain below)

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning     | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> religion           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic    | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation           | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education   | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> architecture           | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literature  | <input type="checkbox"/> social history     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art         | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> commerce               | <input type="checkbox"/> funerary art           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> music       | <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> communications         | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian           | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    |   |

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For each area of significance checked above, explain why this property is important. Use additional sheets as necessary.

The Pastime Theatre was built in 1937 as a movie theatre with a stage large enough for live vaudeville productions. During restoration, a poster was found advertising vaudeville act "Cousin Wilburn and his Tennessee Mountaineers". Newsreels were shown prior to movies which provided education and reporting current events of the time. This included coverage of World War II. Many young women whose husbands were away fighting attended the movies, not only for entertainment, but also to get news of the war.

A part of local history included the separation of blacks and whites. Black theatre goers bought their tickets on the opposite side of the ticket booth from the whites at the bottom of an external stairway that lead them directly up to a segregated area in the balcony. We preserved 9 original seats in this area and they remain roped off and not used. The projection room was also preserved.

According to Anthony W. Horn, his grandfather owned several movie theatres in northwest Alabama, including theatres in Jefferson, Walker and Marion Counties. The Pastime Theatre in Winfield is the only theatre still in existence as all the others have been destroyed or torn down. The theatres in Carbon Hill and Winfield were mirror images of each other, according to theater historian Leroy Ingle who worked for Mr. Thornton as a technician and operator.

The chain of title for the land dates back to 1888. W. S. Thornton purchased the land in 1928 and according to Elwood Smith the Pastime Theatre was built in 1937 and opened in 1938. Mr. Thornton's daughter, Glenera Horn, had a degree in interior design and decorated the theatre.

Winfield was a small rural town in northwest Alabama.

The theatre was constructed in 1937.

The following operated the theatre:

1938 - W. S. Thornton and wife Minnie B. Thornton

1949 - Sold theatre to Thornton Horn Theatres, Inc. (George Thornton and Raymond J. Horn)

1963 - Sold to Worthington Theatres, Inc.

1965 – Sold to Ray Q. Thornton, Glenera T. Horn and R. J. Horn

1965 – Sold to Jack Lane Borders and wife Mary Frances Borders

1986 – Sold to Terry Borders

1989 – Sold to Seals Family (no longer used as a theatre - vacant or used for storage)

2000 – Sold to Winfield Main Street Program and restoration began. Restoration completed early 2003.

2005 – Deeded to City of Winfield operated by a volunteer board appointed by city council

The theatre closed mid-1980's and remained vacant until building was purchased in November 2000 by Winfield Main Street Program and restoration began. The initial phase of restoration was completed early 2003 and the theatre was operated as a performing arts theatre. A new roof and marquee were added in 2007.

Today, the theatre is a performing arts theatre and is a beautiful venue for music concerts, lectures, storytelling, and live theatrical productions.

We purchased the building adjacent to the theatre and renovated it for use as a dinner theatre, complete with catering kitchen, dressing rooms, entertainers' lounge, offices and theatre prop storage.

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**8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*Use attached sheets as necessary*

Marion County Deed Books, See Chain of Title. Marion County Courthouse. Hamilton, Alabama

Interview, Elwood Smith, construction laborer who helped build The Pastime Theatre, interview by Robert Henger. Winfield, AL, July 2002.

Interview, Leroy Ingle, theater historian who worked for owner Mr. Thornton as a technician and operator, interview by Robert Henger. Winfield, AL, September 2002.

Interview, Becky Carothers, niece of Hallye Gene Hill who attended The Pastime Theatre in the 1940's, interview by Mary Hyché. Winfield, AL, August 22, 2011.

**9. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of nominated property: \_\_\_\_\_ .095 \_\_\_\_\_

*Attach a map showing the location of the property.*

**10. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name:	Mary Hyché	Don Studdard	Date:	11-7-14
Organization:	Pastime Theatre Board		Telephone:	205 487-3002
Street & Number:	1052 US Hwy 43		State:	AL
City or Town:	Winfield	Zip:	35594	
Email:	mary.kempfoundation@centurytel.net			

**11. PHOTOGRAPHS:**

Images are essential to the review process. They can be 4x6 color prints or digital images on a CD/DVD. All photographs will become the property of the AHC and will not be returned.

**12. REMINDER:**

Along with this completed application, include attachments for Items 5, 9 and 11 and send them to:

Alabama Historical Commission  
Attn: Lee Anne Wofford  
468 S. Perry Street  
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900

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## **RESTORATION OF THE THEATER (NOVEMBER 2000 - FEBRUARY 2003)**

The building was purchased November 13, 2000 by the Main Street Program for \$25,000 from the Seals Family through donations from Pate family members and the Nelson Kemp Foundation.

We started the restoration project initially by documenting the entire building before removing anything. We took photographs of the exterior and interior condition. Unfortunately, the building had been stripped of all light fixtures, decorative pieces, original doors and hardware and the marquee was no longer on the front of the building. Over the years, structural changes had been made to the lobby area and ticket booths. There were no interior or exterior photographs that could be retained to help restore the building to its original state. Therefore, we looked for clues to reassemble the decorations and lighting in the building. At the same time we took an oral history on the building from local citizens and a Mr. Ronny Wallace who operated the projector room at the theater.

The next step was to stabilize the building from further damage. The roof was in bad condition and over the years a lot of water penetration destroyed the acoustical tiles on the ceiling and walls, and rotted out two-thirds of the theater floor and joists.

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Repairs were immediately made to the roof and floor to stabilize the building from further damage. The damp mildew acoustical tile in the theater was removed, stripping down to brick walls. There were no electrical, mechanical or plumbing features that were functional.

Once the floor was replaced structurally, the general contractor began working on the front facade of the building. Stripping off layers of paint back to the original yellow glazed brick. Repairs were made to damaged areas of the front of the building before a new marquee was constructed and put in place. Both ticket booths were repaired and painted back to their original colors on the front of the building. Marquee lights were added to the overall design and a strip of theater lights were designed at the top of the building facade.

Jack Nix, a local architect, was consulted on the restroom layout and materials for the walls and ceiling in the theater. Mr. Nix recommended we insulate the walls and use dry wall for cost savings and decorative flexibility. Once we removed the acoustical tile from the ceiling we discovered a wooden grid was holding the glued tiles in place. We left the wooden grid and with some repairs and paint it became the new ceiling structure. Beedboard was used in the bottom portion of the interior walls for durability and the period look.

Following interior renovations the mechanical contractor installed the heating and air conditioning system, followed by the electrical contractor. The general contractor proceeded with repairs to the lobby area and the construction of restrooms at the

basement level. There was only one restroom off the lobby area for females when the theater was operating. This restroom was renovated for the elderly and handicapped in the new theater. The theater stage was extended out eight (8) feet to serve more functionally as a performing arts theater in the future.

Final work in painting and trimming out the theater and restoring the floors occurred while we were securing bids for theater stage lighting and curtains, sound system and theater seating. The sound system, stage lighting and curtains were installed at the very end of the project with seating and carpeting being the last pieces in place.

The opening event in the theater occurred before the theater renovation was complete. A premier viewing of "Our Town" by Alabama Public Television opened the theater on November 30, 2002.

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# HISTORY OF THE PASTIME THEATRE

Mr. Elwood Smith informed us the Pastime Theatre was built in 1937 and opened in 1938 as a movie theater with a stage built large enough for vaudeville productions. Interesting enough, during the restoration and demolition work, a poster was discovered behind a panel wall advertising a vaudeville act "Cousin Wilbur and his Tennessee Mountaineers" coming to the Pastime Theater, Tuesday, February 19. Unfortunately, the year of the show was torn off at the corner of the poster.

Elwood said when the movie house was built he was a common laborer on the job with Sim Tidwell and "Little boy" Tidwell. The brick masons were Penny Trull and Al Smith and the carpenters on the job were Arlon Trull, S. Trull and Ruburg Bryant. The building was not air conditioned but had a system of fans and air ventilation. The balcony was divided into three areas. The projector room was at the upper end of the balcony. The balcony seating area was divided into two partitioned sections. A part of local history also includes the separation of whites and blacks in the theater. The black theater goers bought their tickets on the opposite side of the ticket booth from whites at the bottom of an external stairway that lead them directly up to a segregated area in the balcony.

Local history shows that during the theater's heyday that it was under the ownership of George T. Thornton, his wife Ray Quinn M. Thornton, their daughter Glenera R. Horn and son-in-law, R.J. Horn. The daughter Glenera "Guenny" has been reported to have had a degree in interior design and decorated the theater. The Thornton-Horn name is connected to the walk-in theater and drive-in theaters in Guin, and the walk-in theater in Carbon Hill as well as our very own Pastime Theater. According to theater historian Leroy Ingle who worked for Mr. Thornton as a technician and operator, the Carbon Hill theater and the Winfield theater were mirror images of each other.

Leroy tells an interesting story of the film splicer that was found in the theater during the renovation. He and a school friend purchased it for the theaters in Winfield and Guin. A peddler stopped in town one afternoon when Mr. Ingle and his boyhood friend were working and had two splicers to sell for \$20 which was a steal in those days according to Mr. Ingle. However, they were afraid to use the theater petty cash to buy it because Mr. Thornton was very frugal with money. The two boys put their personal money together and paid for it. Mr. Thornton was pleased when they told him of their purchase. Leroy also recalled the first 3-D movie in this area was shown in Winfield. The film had to be run on two synchronized film reels with two operators. The film shown was "House of Wax" with Vincent Price. The 3-D glasses were taken back after the movie ended.

At some time during the late 1950's Mr. Thornton passed away as determined by a foreclosure deed listing Mrs. Thornton as widow. Worthington Theaters, Inc., foreclosed on the property in October 1965. The deed between Worthington Theaters and Thornton-Horn families list the contents of the theater. This is our best indication of how the theater looked and was operated. The theater had 299 upholstered seats downstairs, 69 unupholstered seats downstairs, and 26 upholstered seats in the balcony and 105 unupholstered seats upstairs. For a total seating of 499. The air conditioning consisted of attic fans and hunter wall fans. The theater was home to over 200 speakers to ensure the highest quality sound of that time. Evidently, the Thornton's and Horns had to do their own road and parking upkeep because the theater owned a road grader, 2-wheel trailer, and dump truck. A special note is made that a complete set of attraction board custom-made letters and numbers (407 pieces) made of masonite were in the theater.

In 1965, Jack Lane Borders and wife Francis, purchased the Pastime Theatre. The asking price appears to have been \$96,500 a very large sum of money, in 1965. Mr. Borders owned over twenty cinemas at the time. He continued to operate the Winfield theater until the mid 1970's.

During the late 1950's and throughout the 1960's television came into the homes of most families and the theater business hit a slump. However, the theater operated throughout the 1970's but closed for a number of years and reopened in the 1980's under different management for a few years, but closed down permanently. It remained a vacant building until the Main Street Program reopened it in 2003.

When Jack Border died in 1993, the Seals family of Winfield purchased the property. It remained in this family (A.P., J.R., Bobby, Stacy) until November 14, 2000, when the Main Street Program purchase the property from Stacy Seals.

Immediately after the purchase of the theater the Main Street Board of Directors organized a Winfield Arts Council

to take on the restoration and eventual operations of the theater. Fundraising and restoration commenced at the beginning of 2001 with a goal in mind to restore the former Pastime Movie Theatre into a performing arts theater. Early on in the renovation of the theater another important consideration was to keep the movie capability in place at the theater. Restoring the landmark building to its 1937 artdeco style was also an important consideration and a point of community pride.

In conducting an oral history of the theater, it became very evident that the pastime theater had a warm spot in the hearts of Winfield citizens. Many people recalled going to the movies in their younger years. There were many stories of courtship, "my first date", "The first time I held hands with a girl," "I met my wife there", "I delivered my first kiss at the movies".

Some of the younger married women at that time recalled during World War II when all the men were at war, the women helped to pass their time at the movies. There were also tales about rats running across the stage or the fear of going to the men's room in the basement for fear of these same creatures. Others remember going to the movies Friday night and Saturday as a child. There was not just a movie shown, but double features, cartoons and a news and sports reel on the weeks events. Someone recalled the first technicolor film was shown in Winfield in 1955.

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CHAIN OF TITLE

<u>BK/PG</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>GRANTOR</u>	<u>GRANTEE</u>
2-6	02/02/1888 02/02/1888	Henry F. Musgrove and his wife, F.T. Musgrove	George W. Nettleton
6-24	07/20/1896 09/19/1896	Julia H. Nettleton, the widow and William A. Nettleton, the only child of George H. Nettleton, Late of Kansas City, in the County of Jackson and State of Missouri	Eugene V.R. Thayer
12-130	01/31/1898 08/24/1904	Eugene V.R. Thayer and Susan S. Thayer	Johnathan R. Jones, Henry C. McCollum, William A. Blackeney, John W. Harry and Henry C. Bostick Board of Alderman of City of Winfield, Alabama.
07-434	01/21/1899 01/24/1899	P.E. White, a single man, J.W. Haney and his wife	B.J. Granade
09-489	01/13/1905 02/23/1905	B. J. Granade and M.A. Granade	James H. Doss
55-153	01/13/1928 02/22/1928	Hollis Motor Company, a corporation	J.H. Doss
56-596	01/13/1928 01/21/1928	J.H. Doss and wife, M.S. Doss	W.S. Thornton
68-79	09/27/1938 09/29/1938	J.H. Doss and wife, Snow Doss	W.S. Thornton and Minnie B. Thornton
68-185	12/12/1938 12/14/1930	J.H. Doss and wife, Snow Doss	W.S. Thornton and Minnie B. Thornton
90-501	10/27/1949 10/27/1949	W.S. Thornton and wife, Minnie B. Thornton	George G. Thornton and Raymond J. Horn
144-509	06/14/1963 08/01/1963	Thornton Horn Theatres, Inc., a corporation	Worthington Theatres, Inc., a corporation

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152-153	10/06/1965 10/07/1965	Worthington Theatres, Inc., a corporation	Ray Q. Thornton, Glenera T. Horn and R.J. Horn
153-615	10/06/1965	Ray Q. Thornton, a widow, Glenera T. Horn and husband, R.J. Horn	Jack Lane Borders and wife, Mary Frances Borders
257-787	08/19/1986 08/25/1986	Jack Lane Borders and wife, Mary Frances Borders	Terry Borders
282-261	11/29/1989 12/13/1989	Terry Borders	A.P. Seals and Bobby W. Seals
422-157	09/23/1999 10/25/1999	A.P. Seals, a single man and Bobby W. Seals, a married man	Stacy Seals
442-260	11/13/2000 11/14/2000	Stacy Seals, a single man	Winfield Main Street Program Incorporated
526-072	05/19/2005 05/26/2005	Winfield Main Street Program Incorporated, a corporation	The City of Winfield, Alabama

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