



September 28, 1994

Grand Junction Community Development Department
Planning • Zoning • Code Enforcement
250 North Fifth Street
Grand Junction, Colorado 81501-2668
(303) 244-1430 FAX (303) 244-1599

Mr. Craig Hunter
State Historical Fund Coordinator
The Colorado History Museum
1300 Broadway
Denver, Colorado 80203

RE: September 1, 1994 Grant Round
Avalon Theater - A & D Project

Dear Mr. Hunter,

Enclosed please find a copy of the resolution by which the Grand Junction City Council designated the Avalon Theater on the local Register of Historic Sites, Structures and Districts on September 21, 1994. Please add this information to the grant application filed by the Grand Junction Downtown Development Authority for the September 1, 1994 round of the State Historical Fund. Please do not hesitate to call if you need additional information regarding this designation.

Sincerely,

Kristen Ashbeck
Planner

c: Barbara Creasman, DDA
The Avalon, Inc.



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Planning • Zoning • Code Enforcement
250 North Fifth Street
Grand Junction, Colorado 81501-2668
(303) 244-1430 FAX (303) 244-1599

September 28, 1994

Mr. Pat Gormley
The Avalon Theater, Inc.
PO Box 296
Grand Junction, Colorado 81502

Dear Mr. Gormley,

Congratulations! The Grand Junction City Council, at its September 21, 1994 meeting designated the Avalon Theater on the City Register of Historic Sites, Structures, and Districts. As you are aware, this makes the structure eligible for historic preservation funds as are currently available through the Colorado Historical Society's State Historic Fund.

According to the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, a condition of the approval by Council is payment of all legal advertisement and recording fees by the petitioner. Please provide me with the following at your earliest convenience: a check in the amount of \$50.00 payable to the City of Grand Junction for legal advertisement and a check in the amount of \$5.00 payable to the Mesa County Clerk and Recorder to cover the recording fee for the resolution. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kristen Ashbeck
Planner

c: Barbara Creasman, DDA



Bris

CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO

BOOK 2102 PAGE 250

Resolution No. 81-94

DESIGNATING THE AVALON THEATER
IN THE CITY REGISTER OF HISTORIC SITES, STRUCTURES, AND DISTRICTS

1696807 03:02 PM 09/30/94

MONIKA TODD CLK REC MESA COUNTY CO

WHEREAS, the City Council has established by Ordinance 2765 a City Register of Historic Sites, Structures and Districts in order to officially recognize historic resources of local significance; and

WHEREAS, the property owner of the Avalon Theater is aware of and consent to the designation of these properties as local historic resources; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has reviewed the Avalon Theater for conformance to the adopted criteria for designating historic resources; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has provided public notice regarding the designation of these structures pursuant to the Historic Preservation ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that the Avalon Theater meets the criteria set forth by the Historic Preservation ordinance and, therefore, is a significant local historic resource that merits recognition and preservation.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION:

That the, the Avalon Theater located at 645 Main Street is hereby designated a historic building in the City Register of Historic Sites, Structures and Districts.

PASSED and APPROVED this 21st day of September, 1994.

ATTEST:

Stephame Nye
City Clerk

RT Mantlo
President of Council



COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
1300 Broadway Denver, Colorado 80203

NOT FOR FIELD USE
 ELIGIBLE
 DET. NOT ELIGIBLE
 NOMINATED
 CERTIFIED REHAB
 DATE _____

Historic Building Inventory Record

project name		county	city	state ID no.
		Mesa	Grand Junction	
current building name		owner		
Cooper Theater		Aircadia Investment		
address		P.O. Box 209		
645 Main Street		Colorado Springs, CO		
Grand Junction, CO 81501		township 1S	range 1W	section 14 SE ¼, ¼
historic name		USGS quad name		
Avalon Theater		Grand Junction 1962 yr. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.5' <input type="checkbox"/> 15'		
district name		block	lot(s)	addition yr. of addition
		116	11-15	
film roll	negative nos.	location of negatives		date of construction
by A. Barretto.	6	City of Grand Jct		<u>1922</u> estimate <u>1922</u> actual
paste photograph here.				source
				Daily Sentinel
				use
				<u>movie theater - closed</u> present
				<u>performing arts theater</u> historic
condition				
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent <input type="checkbox"/> good				
<input type="checkbox"/> fair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorating				
extent of alterations				
<input type="checkbox"/> minor <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> major				
describe: brick facade added to cover original facade; interior change to accommodate movies				
style		stories		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original <input type="checkbox"/> moved
Classic Revival		2 with balcony and basement		date(s) of move:
materials		square footage		National Register Eligibility
brick and terra cotta		16,575		Individual: <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
architectural description				Contributing to district:
The original Avalon Theater was built after the Classic Revival Style popular in the early part of the century. In a newspaper description of the new building plans, February, 1922, the Avalon building is described, "It will easily be one of the most attractive theaters in the Rocky Mountain Region". Photographs of the Avalon show three classic arched windows, capped by a frieze and a series of brick columns surrounding and between the windows. Two colors of brick were used to build the front and provide a decorative interest. A large canopy				<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
				local landmark designation
				_____ name _____ date
				associated buildings? <input type="checkbox"/> yes
				type
				if inventoried, list ID nos.
additional pages		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no		

plan shape 	architect Frank W. Frewen (Mountjoy & Frewen)	original owner Grand Junction Theatre Company
	source Daily Sentinel May 9, 1922	source Daily Sentinel, 1922
	builder/contractor Winterburn & Lumsden	theme(s)
source Daily Sentinel May 9, 1922		

construction history (description, names, dates, etc. relating to major additions or alterations to original structure)
 The Avalon Theater building was built in 1922 by the Grand Junction Theater Company (William J. Moyer, James H. Rankin, Ollie E. Bannister, Clyde H. Biggs and Watler Walker were the original incorporators). It was planned as a performing arts center and all purpose community meeting place with the stage able to convert to a ball room and a kitchen to cater banquets. The building underwent interior changes to accommodate motion pictures during the 20's and 30's but in 1947 a drastic change continued yes no

historical background (discuss important persons and events associated with this structure)
 Grand Junction's history reveals an early interest in the performing arts. As early as 1882-83, there was the Armory Hall, a log building where dances and plays were held and after 1883, the Mandel Opera House. Various buildings housed public events from the 1893 Park Opera House and the new auditorium, a drafty, uncomfortable building with poor lighting.
 In the early part of the century, the Grand Valley was a fast growing commercial center, and home of a burgeoning fruit growing industry. The east-west line of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad passed through and often stopping for the night in Grand Junction, which was a hub of railroad traffic in western Colorado. Many travelers stayed the night in the hotels located near the railroad depot including performers continued yes no

significance (check appropriate categories and briefly justify below)

architectural significance:	historical significance:
<input type="checkbox"/> represents the work of a master	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> associated with significant persons
<input type="checkbox"/> possesses high artistic values	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> associated with significant events or patterns
<input type="checkbox"/> represents a type, period or method of construction	<input type="checkbox"/> contributes to an historic district

statement of significance
 The Avalon Theater is the only remaining structure, though it is only partially intact, to represent the early cultural aspirations of the frontier town of Grand Junction. Walter Walker and the city leaders who saw the need for a center for entertainment and cultural events on such a sophisticated scale when the town was a small, fairly isolated western frontier town, must have had a grand vision. The Avalon has remained significant throughout the cultural history of this community and is now being considered for restoration to its former use as a Performing Arts Center.
 continued yes no

references (be specific)
 Sanborn Maps of Grand Junction, Colorado 1886 to 1926 (Museum of Western Colorado)
 Grand Junction News Supplement, May 17, 1884 and May 3 1884
 Grand Junction News, March 8, 1884 (Mesa County Library)
 Mesa County Assessor's Office
 Daily Sentinel Articles, May 9, 1922, January 6, 1923
 "Book of Attractions--A History of Grand Junction's Entertainment, 1912-1949)
 by Marion Fletcher
 continued yes no

surveyed by Angeline Barrett	affiliation City of Grand Junction	date March 12, 1992
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The AVALON THEATER

Architectural Description (cont.)

stretched out over the entrance. This facade was destroyed in a remodeling that took place sometime in 1947. The side and rear walls of the building remain intact but the old Beaux Arts facade was changed to a plain 60' high brick facade to "modernize" the appearance. The interior was also altered. From "blue velvet curtain...walnut and gold of the seats were enhanced with brown leather upholstery...the beautiful proscenium arch" of the 1922 building to "...about all that will be left of the original structure are the outside walls and a major portion of the huge balcony". Daily Sentinel 6-27-47.

Construction History (cont.)

to the exterior facade and the interior occurred under the ownership of the C.H. Cooper Company. The building now exists in its "modernized" form, a huge blank brick wall with an uninteresting neon sign advertising it as the Cooper Theater. Ceramic tile faces the bottom of the street side of the building where the movie billings are advertised.

Historical Background (cont.)

between engagements in Denver and Salt Lake City. This made possible an opportunity for the people of Grand Junction and surrounding towns to have first rate entertainment.

A group of prominent businessmen began to promote the concept of a theater facility during the years 1921-22. They formed the Grand Junction Theater Company and began in 1922 to construct a theater at the corner of Seventh and Main Streets (This was the site of the original Grand Junction Town Company owned by George A. Crawford, who drew up the articles of incorporation for the City of Grand Junction, and promoted it in its early years. The Daughters of the American Revolution designated the site a local landmark in 1924, with the dedication of a plaque that is still in the theater.) Walter Walker, publisher of the Daily Sentinel, acted as manager.

Some of the artists who performed at the Avalon Theater were: actresses Mary Pickford and Ethel Barrymore; Al Jolson and Company; John Phillips Sousa's Band; poet, Carl Sandburg; evangelist Billy Sunday to list the more famous.

When the motion picture industry began in the 20's and 30's to dominate the entertainment industry, the Avalon accommodated the change. Silent films featured musical accompaniment by the best local musicians and later the interior was altered to enable the showing of larger screened movies. The Avalon was leased to the C.H. Cooper Company in 1933, following financial troubles and subsequently sold to the Cooper Foundation in 1946. It has been mostly a movie theater ever since, though many local events such as high school graduations, musical recitals, Chataquas were held there through the years. It remained one of two theaters until the 1970's and closed in 1989.





Avalon Theatre face lift to feature original 1920s-era facade

Melissa Schmitt
Daily Sentinel

11/24/94

Buried underneath the bricks covering the Avalon Theatre at 535 Main St. is a magnificent

1920s-era theater facade — a spectacle that will once again be on display as part of renovation efforts for the historic building.

"When they get those bricks off,

it'll really be something to see. It was quite spectacular," Grand Junction Mayor R.T. Mantlo said. "It was quite the showplace."

When the original theater front was obscured in the 1950s, it was most likely to keep with the times, said Pat Gormley, chairman of the Avalon board of directors.

"They were probably trying to modernize," he said.

A recently announced \$100,000 grant from the Colorado Historical Society will fund the renovations.

When can Grand Junction expect to see a new face on the Avalon?

"Things are in motion now," said Barbara Creasman, executive director of the Downtown Development Association.

Partial renovations should be completed by the first quarter of 1995, Gormley said.

"We hope to have it usable by mid- to late summer," he said.

The theater will have to shut down when work begins on the

building front. That won't begin until the weather is stable, he said.

Once reopened, the theater will play host to children's theater, a senior showcase, country singers, concert pianists and chorales, one-man shows and seminars, Gormley said.

"Don't think of this as just for tutus and symphony," he said.

Fund-raising to restore the Avalon began nearly two years ago, after the city of Grand Junction and the Downtown Development Authority each contributed \$100,000 for the purchase of the theater. The city is the official owner, Creasman said.

In the past, community groups depended on the high schools' space for performances. It reached the point, however, where school groups couldn't schedule their own performances in their auditoriums, she said.

The Grand Junction City Council established a citizen's task

force in the mid-1970s to make recommendations for a performing arts center.

The task force originally wanted to build a new facility, but that wasn't feasible. And the Avalon, which had since become the Cooper Theater, was determined to be a better option financially — not to mention its historic value, Creasman said.

Then came the oil shale bust, and the project was forced onto the back burner.

The committee was reactivated after the economy stabilized in 1989. The Cooper shut down and the Avalon restoration project officially got under way.

"It has taken us five years to rekindle enthusiasm for this building as a community events center," Gormley said.

The theater was constructed in 1923 as a performing arts center by former Daily Sentinel Editor and Publisher Walter Walker. Artists brightened frontier life

considerably, and Walker sponsored more than 800 performers between 1912 and 1949.

The theater was host to plays, opera, vaudeville and orchestra, attracting such well-known performers as bandleader John Philip Sousa, entertainer Al Jolson and poet Carl Sandburg.

Coloratura soprano Lucy Gates was the first artist to perform at the Avalon, at opening-night ceremonies. It was reported that Gates interrupted her program to inform the audience that from the standpoint of a singer, "the acoustics of the new house were perfect."

The Strong Music Co., which once stood at Sixth and Main streets, donated a Baldwin Grand Piano to the theater.

"It's important to the history of Grand Junction that we restore all the buildings in the historic district," Mantlo said. "That's the history of the town. If you don't restore them, you'll never get them back."



When the facade is restored, the Avalon Theatre, 535 Main St., will once again sport its 1920s look.

Reduced sentence granted to man

AVALON THEATER

Location: 645 Main Street
Tax Parcel: 2945-144-19-002
Legal Description: The Western 85 feet of Lots 11 through 15, Block 116, City of Grand Junction
Property Owner: City of Grand Junction

Summary of Historic Significance (excerpted from Historic Building Inventory Record)

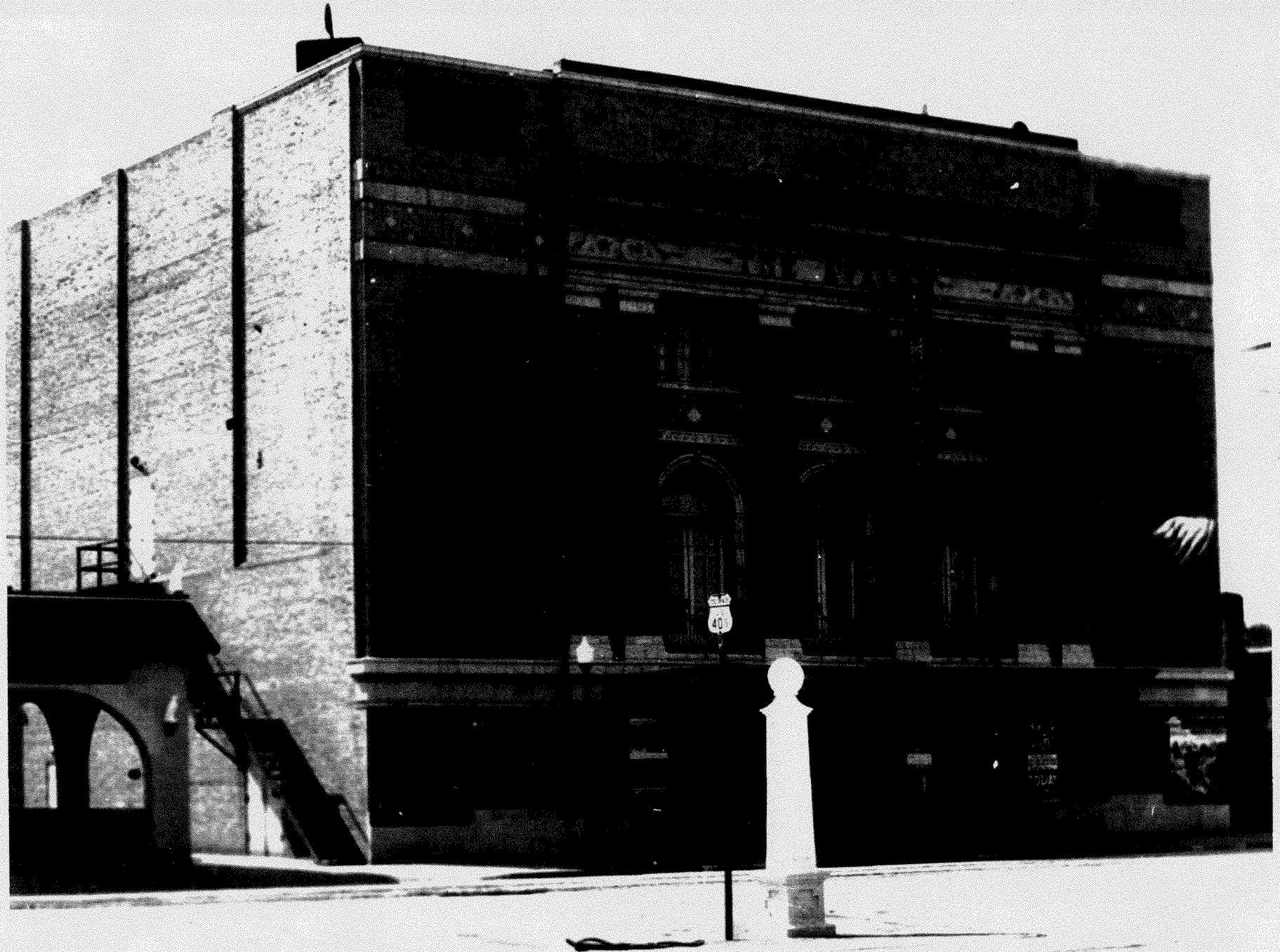
Grand Junction's history reveals an early interest in the performing arts. As early as 1882-1883, there was the Armory hall, a log building where dances and plays were held and after 1883, the Mandel Opera House. In 1893, the Park Opera House was constructed and also used for public events.

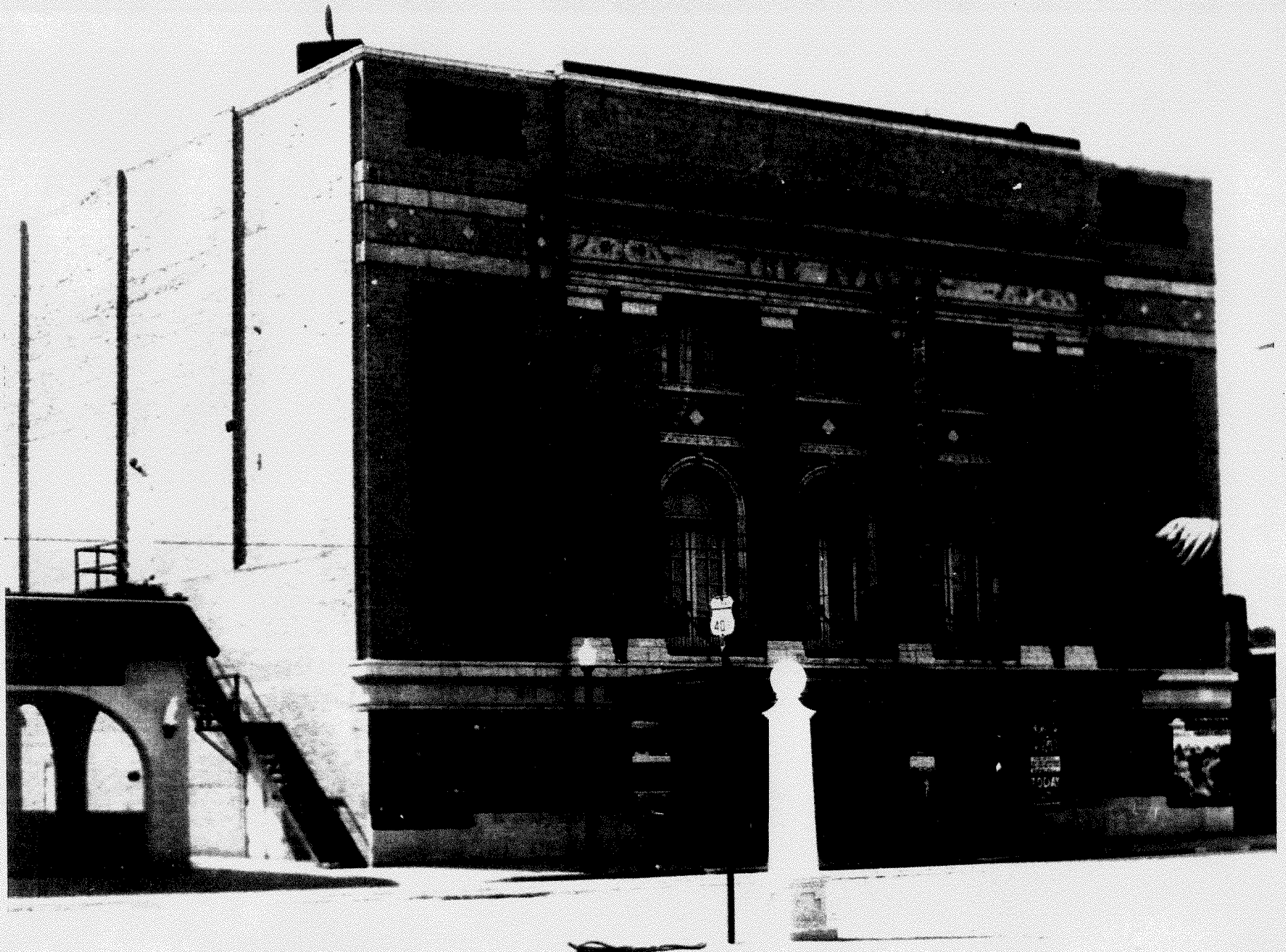
In the early part of the century, the Grand Valley was a fast growing commercial center, and home of a burgeoning fruit growing industry. The east-west line of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad passed through and often stopped for the night in Grand Junction. Many travelers stayed the night in the hotels located near the railroad depot including performers between engagements in Denver and Salt Lake City. This made possible an opportunity for the people in the Grand Valley to have first rate entertainment.

A group of prominent businessmen began to promote the concept of a theater facility during the years of 1921-1922. They formed the Grand Junction Theater Company and began to construct the Avalon Theater near the corner of 7th and Main Streets in late 1922. Walter Walker, then publisher of the Daily Sentinel, served as Manager of the Company. Some of the early artist who performed at the Avalon included actresses Mary Pickford and Ethel Barrymore, Al Jolson, John Phillips Sousa's Band; and poet Carl Sandburg.

The Avalon Theater is the only remaining structure, though it is only partially intact, to represent the early cultural aspirations of the frontier town of Grand Junction. Walter Walker and the city leader who saw the need for a center for entertainment and cultural events on such a sophisticated scale when the town was a small, fairly isolated western frontier town, must have had a grand vision. The Avalon has remained significant throughout the cultural history of the Grand Junction community--it is fitting that plans be carried out to restore the building to its former grand appearance and to its use as a performing arts center.

The original Avalon Theater was built in the Classic Revival Style popular in the early part of the 20th Century. In a newspaper description of the new building plans, February, 1922, the Avalon was described as ". . . easily one of the most attractive theaters in the Rocky Mountain Region . . ." Historic photographs of the Avalon show three classic arched windows, capped by a frieze and series of brick columns surrounding and between the windows. The plans drawn up under the stewardship of The Avalon, Inc. hope to reconstruct these exterior architectural details which gave the building its original character.









THE HISTORIC AVALON