



Historic Property Report

Historic Name: Spokane Civic Theater

PropertyID: 154946

Location



Address: 1020 N HOWARD ST, SPOKANE, WA 99201

Tax No/Parcel No: 35181.4122

Plat/Block/Lot: KEYSTONE ADD LOTS 35 TO 47 B5

GeographicAreas: Spokane County,SPOKANE NWQuadrangle,T25R43E

Information

ConstructionDates:

ConstructionType	Year	Circa
Built Date	1967	<input type="checkbox"/>

Number of stories: N/A

HistoricUse:

Category	Subcategory
Recreation and Culture	Recreation and Culture - Theater

Historic Context: Architecture



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Architect/Engineer:

Category	Name or Company
Builder	Redding Construction Co.
Architect	Kundig, Moritz
Landscape Architect	Woerner, Robert L.

Project History

Project Number, Organization, Project Name	Resource Inventory	SHPO Determination	SHPO Determined By, Determined Date
2011-06-00088,, Assessors Data Project: Spokane Commercial	6/1/2011	Not Determined	
2016-12-08751,, Spokane Mid-20th Century Modern Survey 2016	1/8/2017		

Photos



Southwest corner looking northeast



Bird's-eye view, looking north

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Front (north) facade, looking south



Front (north) facade, looking southwest



Main entry, north facade



Garden at northeast corner, looking east



Southwest corner, looking north



South stair, detail

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West facade, looking east



South stair, looking south



Setting looking north



East rear facade, north side, looking west



Southwest corner, detail



Southeast corner looking northwest

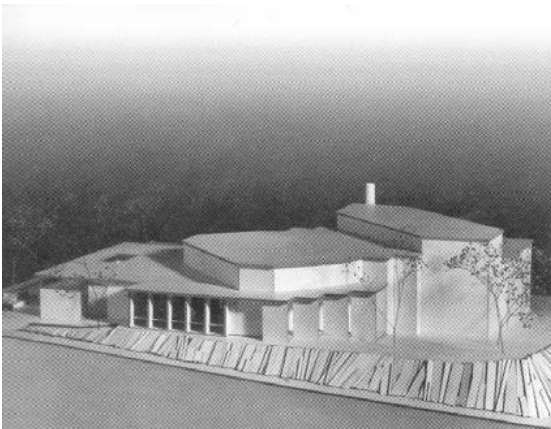
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East rear facade, south side, looking west



Setting looking west



Model



Detail of concrete block



East facade, detail



Southwest corner looking northeast



Preliminary sketch



North facade, historic view

Inventory Details - 1/8/2017

Common name: Spokane Civic Theatre
Date recorded: 1/8/2017
Field Recorder: Diana Painter
Field Site number:
SHPO Determination:

Detail Information

Characteristics:

Category	Item
Foundation	Concrete - Poured
Form Type	
Roof Type	Flat with Parapet
Roof Material	Asphalt/Composition - Built Up
Cladding	Concrete - Block (cmu)
Structural System	Masonry - Concrete Block
Plan	Irregular



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Surveyor Opinion

Property appears to meet criteria for the National Register of Historic Places: Yes

Property is located in a potential historic district (National and/or local): No

Property potentially contributes to a historic district (National and/or local): No

Significance narrative: History. The Spokane Civic Theatre was incorporated in 1947, first utilizing the old Post Theater and then the Riverside Playhouse from 1957-1967. Their new purpose-built facility, designed by architect Moritz Kundig, opened in 1967. Spokane Civic Theatre is one of the oldest community theaters in the country and one of few that owns its own building (Spokane Civic Theatre <http://www.spokanecivictheatre.com/>).

The Spokane Civic Theatre hired architect Moritz Kundig to design the theater in late 1964 or early 1965. At that time, the plan was that the building would seat 300 to 400 people. Fund-raising began immediately, after it was estimated that the new building would cost \$250,000. A sketch of the proposed structure was published in the Spokesman Review on February 28, 1965.

In an interview with Aaron Bragg in 2010, architect Moritz Kundig stated that the Spokane Civic Theatre was "a plum of a commission." Originally designed for poured-in-place concrete, Kundig opted for concrete block to meet the very limited budget. Kundig says that, "I think it is one of my best buildings" (PROOF!, 2010).

Architectural Context. Brutalism is a style of architecture popular primarily in the 1960s and known for its stark, monumental forms; three-dimensional, sculptural appearance; and use of heavily textured, often board formed, concrete. Often seen in civic and educational structures and complexes, it has been criticized for its lack of traditional urban design qualities. It is known for its lack of window openings and other features that would integrate it with a traditional urban environment; articulation is often achieved by the contrast of solids and voids, rather than conventional openings. The style has its roots in England, particularly in the work of Alison and Peter Smithson. The name refers to the French phrase, "Beton Brut" or raw concrete. Originally referred to as "New Brutalism," the style sought to integrate structure and expression. Examples in Washington State include Gould Hall, which houses the College of Built Environments at the University of Washington, and the Psychology Building at Central Washington University in Ellensburg.

Architect Moritz Kundig. Born in Switzerland in 1925, Moritz Kundig was accepted into the Gymnasium in Winterthur, the prominent state high school for university-track students, where he took seven years of Latin, six of French, five of English, and one of Italian - along with German literature, history, math, and sciences. Kundig completed his compulsory military training after graduating from high school, eventually becoming a first lieutenant in the Swiss Army. He then enrolled at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zürich - the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology - one of the most prestigious schools in Europe, where architecture was taught strictly from the Modernist perspective. Kundig graduated with a Dipl. Architekt ETH in 1951, then went to work at the Ribary firm in Lucerne. He arrived in the United States in 1952, taking a job first in Salt Lake City then in Merced, California; an ad in an architectural magazine led him to

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Whitehouse, Price, DeNeff and Deeble in Spokane in 1955. That same year, Kundig joined the Ken Brooks-Bruce Walker joint venture then working on the design for the new Washington Water Power Central Service Facility. In 1956, after winning fourth prize in a national competition to design the Cowboy Hall of Fame and Museum in Oklahoma City, he joined Walker, McGough and Trogdon full time. Two years later, Kundig began working for McClure & Adkison; by 1962 he was on his own, forming Moritz Kundig & Associates. Kundig taught fourth- and fifth-year design in the University of Idaho's Department of Art and Architecture from 1963 to 1964. With architects Ron Tan and Dale Brookie, he formed Tan Brookie Kundig in 1973, which merged with Trogdon Smith Grossman to create NAC Architecture in 1979. Kundig was named an AIA fellow in 1984. Notable projects include the Unitarian Church (1961); the McNeil Island Penitentiary Chapel (1962), for which he won an AIA merit award; the Ferris High School Auditorium (1963); the Daily Idahoan Building, Moscow, 1966; and the Holmlund and Peringer residences (1963 and 1966, respectively), in addition to the Spokane Civic Theatre.

Physical description:

Location and Setting. The Spokane Civic Theatre is located in the heart of an area immediately north of Riverfront Park, the site of Expo '74, and is dominated by cultural and sports/recreational uses. As a result, there are also many restaurants, several hotels and extensive parking lots in the area. There are also a number of social service agencies and commercial uses. Directly southwest of the Spokane Civic Theatre is the Spokane Arena. To the north, across a parking lot, is the KXLY Broadcast Center. Also in the neighborhood are the YMCA, Camp Reed (related to the YMCA), Spokane Indians Youth Baseball, Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington, and the Boy Scouts of America building. The Spokane Civic Theatre is oriented toward the intersection of W. Dean Avenue (to the south) and N. Howard Street (to the west). The main entry, however, is off W. Gardner Avenue, to the north. To the south is the Spokane Federal Credit Union Drive-Up window and parking; to the east, which is the rear of the building, is the surface parking lot for the theater; to the north is more parking and a large transit stop; and to the west is parking for the Spokane Arena. While another building might look isolated and disconnected from the urban environment in this sea of parking, the dramatic expression of the Spokane Civic Theatre building, the fact that it is sited slightly higher than the surrounding area, and its location adjacent to a large basalt outcropping mitigates this effect. The building and site occupy a .82-acre parcel.

Materials. The Spokane Civic Theatre is constructed of concrete block with a poured concrete foundation and a built-up roof. Windows are anodized aluminum frame. Color and texture play an important role for the building, with texture incorporated into the block masonry, red accents provided by the doors, contrasting with black for the box office area, fixtures, handrails, and the back stair, and window and door frames. As a whole, the building has few window openings, reflecting its use as a theater, which places additional importance on the texture incorporated into the block masonry. The entry area on the north side of the building includes multi-colored stone veneer in a small alcove that is not original.

Design and Massing. The three-story Spokane Civic Theatre has an irregular footprint that essentially describes two central volumes with opposing wings that extend north and east. These various intersecting forms enclose the functions of the two theaters that occupy the building, the Spokane Civic Theatre on the front (west and north sides) and the Firth J. Chew Studio Theatre on the rear, east side. The building has a flat roof with a parapet that is finished with a simple metal coping. It is sited close to the intersection of N. Howard Street and W. Dean Street, extending to the back of the sidewalk in these locations, with the exception that the building is pulled back from the corner to avoid a

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basalt rock outcropping. The building is set back slightly from W. Gardner Avenue on the north side, allowing for an entry court and formal landscaped area. A small parking lot is located in the northeast corner of the parcel. A truck loading and service area is located at the southeast corner. While the main entry and box office is on the north side, a secondary entry is located on the south side, winding up from the sidewalk along W. Dean Avenue in an organic fashion. The enclosure for this stair forms a canted corner to the building that directly faces the main public entry to the Spokane Arena. The Brutalist building was constructed in 1967.

North, front façade. The main entrance to the building is on the north side, on W. Gardner Avenue, which appears as an internal driveway to the parking area within the block bounded by W. Boone Avenue, N. Washington Street, W. Dean Avenue, and N. Howard Street. This is a one-story portion of the building, raised approximately three feet above grade, with deep eave overhangs that shelter the entry stairs and ramp, and provides a space for downlights that illuminate the public entries and add nighttime drama to the building. The entry is accessed from the east via a combination of a curved and angled concrete walkways through a formal garden area, or the sidewalk along W. Gardner Avenue (see Landscape Design below). The main entry stair is located on the west side of this façade, with five broad concrete steps with concrete cheekwalls. This leads to a raised, open plaza area that fronts the main entry, which consists of two sets of double wood entry doors painted red with large glass panes, and paired, broad windows of full-height glass to their left. This ensemble is topped by three broad transom windows. The effect of this entry is to allow visual, as well as physical, access to the interior box office and lobby. To the left and perpendicular to the entry are paired, one-over-one-light windows that serve as the exterior box office windows. These are set into an inset of vertical wood, painted black, that house office functions. To the right of the raised entry plaza is a path to an outdoor seating area on the west side of the building.

What was originally a second broad entry stair that comprised the central bay on this façade has been altered to accommodate an ADA ramp that runs parallel to the front face of the building from east to west. It is enclosed with a solid rail of concrete block that blends with the concrete block of the building. At the top of the ramp the route to the entry continues in a small dog leg that extends behind the original concrete wall dividing the two stairs. The wood insert into the original plaza continues here. The two-over-two-light window pattern continues as well. Dividing what was originally the two stairs is a broad panel that was originally concrete block, with a small tree planted at the ground level, partially enclosed by the cheekwalls of the two entry stairs. Today this area has been clad in an uncoursed, multi-colored stone veneer that contrasts with the austerity of the rest of the building. This covers the panel from the ground to the eaves, including the two cheekwalls, creating a small alcove. Today a rustic table and benches that have the appearance of stone occupy this area. A cut-out comedy/tragedy mask is located on the back wall of the alcove. The third, solid bay on this façade is located on the east side. Mounted on this façade is a sign spelling out "Spokane Civic Theatre" in black, free-standing letters. To the left of this sign is a small, recent addition to the building in concrete block.

East façade. The east façade of the building is the back of the main theater, but houses the front entrance to the Studio Theatre. On the right or north side is a one-story, compatible addition to the building. Features on this portion of the building include deep eave overhangs that continue the depth of the eave overhangs on the north side; two tall, two-over-two-light windows with anodized aluminum frames that extend to the eaves

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enframed by small, fin-like projections of concrete block; and one flush metal man door. The windows here match those on the west façade. The concrete block on this addition

continues the pattern seen in the rest of the building, but is a slightly different color. The original building continues to the left, with modulations of the original building form. The tallest portion encloses the Main Stage Theatre. A loading dock is located on the north-facing portion, with a metal overhead door. Raised letters spell out "Spokane Civic Theatre" on the east face, along with a comedy/tragedy mask in profile. A one-story projection to the east of this volume houses mechanical equipment, and provides a platform for additional mechanical equipment and venting. The next, southerly volume houses the studio theater. It includes various ground-level openings, including access to storage and work areas. The main entry is on the south side. It is represented by a double, solid door, painted red, and labeled "Studio Theatre" and "Costume Rental," topped by a single transom window. The doors are located within an area that is inset slightly from the main plane of the building, and covered by a canopy that extends to and around the corner.

South façade. The east side of the south building façade is three stories in height. There are no openings at the ground level here. At the second and third levels are three groupings of three small, narrow, individually placed windows that either have single fixed lights or a one-over-one-light. Turning the corner, these levels are accessed via an exterior set of stairs with black-painted horizontal rails that access flush doors into the building at the corner, painted red. The stairs are fastened on the south side to a taller volume with no openings. This transitions to a series of narrow modulated forms that express the angled, diagonal cut-away on this portion of the building. To traverse this rise to the lobby, five concrete steps from the sidewalk and nine concrete steps that are adjacent to the base of the volume previously mentioned climb to the entry path covered by concrete block panels that partially enclose the covered stairs that continue to the south entry door of the lobby. The stairs are irregular, with an organic feel. The vertical panels that partially enclose them from the western exposure have a regular appearance, with a small vertical opening under the eaves. Halfway up this stair is a double solid entry door, painted red, in a small alcove. At the top of the stairs, a double wood entry door with tall glass lights and a tall transom access the lobby.

West façade. Beginning on the south side of this façade, the tall volumes circumnavigated by the exterior stairs just described provides a space for signage for current productions. Adjacent to it, to the north, are the modulated volumes just described, which are slightly lower than the tallest portion of the building. These provide space for another "Spokane Civic Theatre" and comedy and tragedy sign. Below and fronting this solid portion of the building are the four tall panels that enclose the stairs. They are stepped, allowing open views to the south and the Spokane Arena, and are constructed of the same textured concrete block as the rest of the building, with downlights mounted at about the center that emphasize this texture. The next portion of the building represents the one-story building lobby. This is covered by a deep eave overhang that covers the walkway to the rear lobby entrance. Lighting the lobby are five window bays, with full-height glass with one-over-two lights, the upper portion being a transom. They are enframed by shallow concrete block projections. Downlights under the eaves here light the lobby and the basalt rock formation below. To the left of this window wall is a recessed area that is at the same level as the main floor of the lobby. It is occupied by the rustic, simulated stone tables and seating seen elsewhere on the site, and covered by an open trellis. To the north of this seating area, which is accessed from

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the main lobby plaza, is a solid bay with a large, three-panel display case, with "Spokane Civic Theatre" spelled out above.

Interior. Like its exterior, the lobby of the Spokane Civic Theatre is relatively simple in its materials and finishes, with few architectural embellishments. It relies on the expression of its structure and spatial complexity to generate interest. This treatment befits an attitude that the space will be animated by people, rather than opulence or architectural details. The facility has two performance spaces, the Main Stage theater and the Firth J. Chew Studio Theatre. The main auditorium is a proscenium theater with a seating capacity of 336 and the Studio theater is a small black box theater seating approximately 85. The backstage area houses a scene shop, costume shop, storage for props, a fully furnished green room, offices, and dressing rooms (Spokane Civic Theatre, <http://www.spokanecivictheatre.com/>).

Changes over time. The building has seen relatively few changes. The primary changes can be seen at the entrance. The wood construction that encloses office and box office areas was brought forward in alignment with the face of the building, whereas it was previously set back, making both the entrance stairs and entrance plazas of the building similar. In 1972, the three story addition was made, adjoining to the backstage area of the main theater. This space was used for set construction, rehearsals, the costume shop, and offices for the continued upkeep of the theatre. The lower levels of the theatre, previously used as rehearsal space, were converted into a studio theatre in 1979. An addition has been constructed at the northeast corner that extends the length of the front façade another bay, encloses a former entrance, and adds two windows on the east facade. This may be the addition that is noted in the record as occurring in 1999. The display case on at the northwest corner of the building was installed in 2003. The ADA ramp is new. The trellis over the raised outdoor patio was constructed in 2012. In 2013, the Main Stage Women's restroom was expanded and a new Donor Lounge & Meeting Room was added onto the building. Additional ADA improvements were made in 2016. A number of these changes are minor, some are reversible, and others are compatible with the building as a whole. The overall integrity and condition of the building is good.

Landscape Design. The site and designed landscape of the Spokane Civic Theatre is an important part of its historic significance. The building is deliberately designed around a basalt rock outcropping at the corner of W. Dean Avenue and N. Howard Street. This was no doubt a practical consideration, but it also enhances the building, the stones contrasting in color and texture with the manmade texture of the concrete blocks, creating a rugged "base" for the building. The stone is left in a natural state where the stair on the south side of the building wraps around it. Beginning at the corner of Dean and Howard, however, a low basalt wall retains the berm that rises up to the base of the west façade of the building, covered in stone, gravel, and informal plantings. A raised bed, retained by a low stone wall on three sides, forms a base for the reader board sign for the theater at the corner. It features basalt rocks, basalt columns, informal ground cover, and shrubs. The street-level plaza in front of the theater is relatively simple, with two colors of pavers. Two traditional pedestrian lights are located here. To the east of the plaza is a formal garden with a curved and diagonal concrete path, low level ground cover, a few basalt columns, and young evergreens. The formality of this garden contrasts with the informal plantings elsewhere on the site. The street furnishings throughout the site are rustic simulated stone tables and benches. As previously mentioned, the small alcove that separates what was previously two identical sets of



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stairs to the theater has been re-finished with multi-colored stone veneer in an informal pattern that contrasts with the naturalistic stone found elsewhere on the grounds. The traditional perimeter planting at the parking area is composed of trees and shrubs with a variety of shapes, textures and colors. Signs throughout the site are mounted on the building and elsewhere thanking benefactors for donations.

Changes over time. Historic photos show that previously, the landscape at the entry was simpler, with angled beds and low level, modern lighting directing patrons into the theater. A small tree was located in the spaces between the staircases. The treatment of this space, the street furniture found throughout the site, and the formal garden in the northeast corner are all new.

Bibliography:

Bragg, Aaron, "Moritz Kundig." PROOF!, no. 4 (2010)

Interview with Moritz Kundig, conducted by Aaron Bragg, August 2010.

"Moritz Kundig," The AIA Historic Directory of American Architects, 1970, <http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/What's%20here.aspx>, accessed December 2016.

Pehnt, Wolfgang, editor, Encyclopedia of Modern Architecture. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1964.

"Preliminary Sketch Outlines Proposed Theater," Spokesman Review, February 28, 1965.

Spokane Civic Theatre, <http://www.spokanecivictheatre.com/>, accessed January 2017.

"Spokane Civic Theatre" Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spokane_Civic_Theatre, accessed January 2017

Whiffen, Marcus and Frederick Koeper, American Architecture 1607-1976. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1981.

Inventory Details - 6/1/2011

Commonname:
Date recorded: 6/1/2011
Field Recorder: Artifacts Consulting, Inc.
Field Site number: 35181.4122
SHPO Determination Not Determined



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Detail Information

Surveyor Opinion

Significance narrative: Data included on this historic property inventory form (HPI) detail stemmed from County Assessor building records imported by the Washington State Department of Archaeology of Historic Preservation (DAHP) into WISAARD in 2011. This upload reduces data entry burden on community volunteers and historical societies participating in the survey and inventory of their communities. The intent of this project is directed specifically to facilitating community and public involvement in stewardship, increasing data accuracy, and providing a versatile planning tool to Certified Local Governments (CLGs).

Currently survey and inventory projects at the local level produce a field form for each property surveyed and include digital photographs. Volunteers doing the survey track down and manually enter all the owner, parcel, and legal data manually. Manual data entry diminishes accuracy and quantity of resources volunteers can survey. Recognizing this, DAHP uploaded building data for each Certified Local Government (CLG) on properties that were built in or before 1969 to provide an accurate and comprehensive baseline dataset. Volunteers doing survey work need only to verify data, add in photographs and extent of alterations and architectural style data, as well as expand upon the physical description and significance statement as new data is collected. For

planning purposes, the attrition rate of properties built in or before 1969 can start to be measured to guide stewardship priorities.

Project methodology entailed use of the University of Washington's State Parcel Database (<http://depts.washington.edu/wagis/projects/parcels/development.php>) to provide the base parcel layer for CLGs. Filtering of building data collected from each county trimmed out all properties built after 1969, as well as all current, previously inventoried properties. Translation of building data descriptors to match fields in HPI allowed the data upload. Calculation of point locations utilized the center of each parcel. Data on this detail provides a snapshot of building information as of 2011. A detailed project methodology description resides with DAHP. Project team members: Historic Preservation Northwest, GeoEngineers, and Artifacts Consulting, Inc. (project lead).

Physical description: The building at 1020 N Howard Street, Spokane, is located in Spokane County. According to the county assessor, the structure was built in 1967 and is a theater. Also according to the county assessor, the structure was remodeled in 1999. The building is a 2-story structure.