



ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:
 Monumental brick construction; four stories occupying one-half block. Front facade divided into three sections: a projecting central pavilion with a giant horseshoe-arch entrance supported on fluted columns, scalloped cornice, and slightly pedimented parapet; and two corner pavilions having recessed flat-arch entrances framed by freestanding columns and elongated horseshoe-arch fenestration above, which rise through 2 floors. There is a profuse linear and sculptural terra-cotta decoration on the two street facades (south and west). Two entrances are located on the side (west) facade, one that leads into the theater and a second of paired horseshoe arches for the Shriner's lodge.

OPERATIONS:

BUILDINGS:

LANDSCAPE FEATURES:

NAME: Temple Theater

STREET NO: 2318 8th St.

TOWN/VIC: Meridian, Mississippi

COUNTY: Lauderdale

BLOCK/LOT: Ragsdale Block 66, lots 11-16

PRESENT OWNER: Hamasa Building Association

ADDRESS: 2309 9th St. Meridian

PRESENT USE:

FORMER USE: Theater, lodge

DATE: 1923-1927

STYLE: Moorish Revival

ARCH/BUILDER: Emile Weil

SOURCE OF DATE: Cornerstone

ENVIRONMENT: Commercial

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
 NEIGHBORHOOD
 LOCAL
 STATE x
 NATIONAL

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:
 The Temple Theater was erected in 1924 by the Hamasa Shriners, but because of a shortage of funds the auditorium was unfinished until the building was leased by the Saenger movie chain in 1927, which completed the interior at a cost of \$135,000. In addition to movies ("photo-plays"), the Saenger Temple Theatre also had comedies, news weeklies, reviews, scenics and novelties, including travelling vaudevilles. At its opening dedication it was called "Mississippi's finest theater" and Meridian became "one of the headlines of progressive large cities in the field of entertainment" although the city already held this position due to the Grand Opera House). The original seating capacity has decreased from 1760 to 1634. The stage was reportedly larger than any in the U.S., with the exception of the Roxy in New York, at the time the theater was completed.

PHOTOS

NEG. #



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TEMPLE

MISSISSIPPI
JUNIOR HIGH
SCHOOL
PLAY

TOWELL

TEMPLE THEATER

Meridian, Lauderdale County, Mississippi

Jody Cook

January, 1979

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

2318 8th Street.

Photo 29