



## Department of Natural Resources

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### LIBERTY THEATER LISTED IN NATIONAL REGISTER

The Liberty Theater was officially listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 22, 1984. In making the announcement, Dr. Elizabeth Lyon, State Historic Preservation Officer, stated that the property is significant to the musical and theatrical history of Columbus and the state of Georgia. The Liberty Theater is owned by the William H. Spencer Golden Owlettes.

Described as a brick theater building with a balcony, stage, and stage loft, the Liberty Theater was constructed in 1925. It was built as a theater for blacks by the Martin Theater chain during the peak of the jazz and blues era. A frequent performer at the Liberty was "Ma" Rainey (1886-1939), a Columbus native who became the "Mother of Blues." The theater closed in 1973, after integration opened other local theaters to blacks. It was sold in 1980 to the present owners, who hope to reopen it as a facility for the young people of the area to participate in the performing arts.

The National Register is a listing of historic buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts worthy of preservation. The owner(s) of such property gains the advantage of protection from federally funded projects and can be eligible for certain tax incentives and benefits, while retaining all rights due the owner of any private property.

Nominations to the National Register are made by the State Historic Preservation Office. This office works with and funds many Area Planning and Development Commissions (APDCs) to provide preservation planning assistance at the local level through the services of regional preservation planners. The Liberty

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Theater nomination was prepared by the Lower Chattahoochee APDC Regional Preservation Planner, Dr. Joe Mahan.

For additional information concerning the Liberty Theater nomination, the National Register program, the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, or the easement program, contact the State Historic Preservation Office at 404/656-2840, or the Lower Chattahoochee APDC regional preservation planner at 404/324-4221.

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